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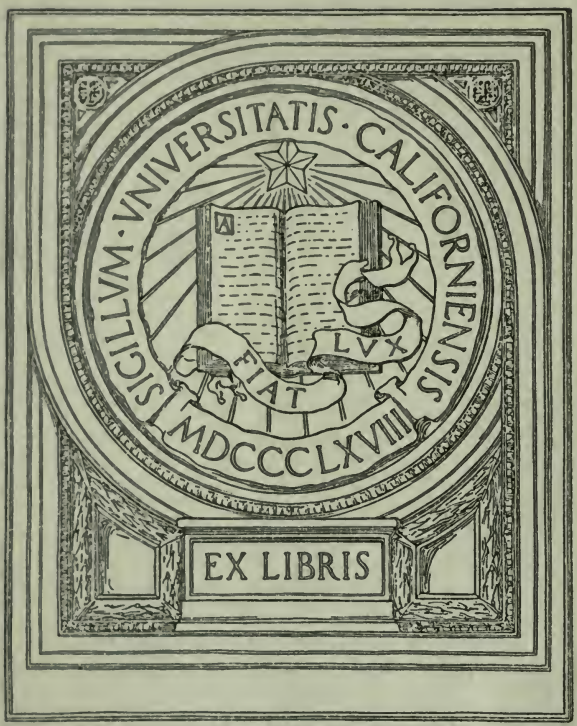
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MODERN GOLF

HAROLD H. HILTON

Winner British Amateur Championship 1900, 1901, 1911; American Amateur Championship 1911; British Open Championship 1892, 1897

MODERN GOLF

BY

HAROLD H. HILTON

Illustrated with Photographs

OUTING HANDBOOKS

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MODERN GOLF

MODERN GOLF

CHAPTER I

Practice—the Foundation of Excellence

THE first lesson to be learned by the aspiring golfer is the value of practice. This is the beginning and end of excellence—the fundamental secret of improvement, other things being equal. Speaking for myself, I am convinced that the present position I hold in the golfing world is in a very great measure due to the faculty I am gifted with, of being able to proceed out to some quiet corner of the links, with just a couple of clubs and a dozen balls, and religiously set myself the task of trying to find out the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of these particular weapons. To many this procedure may seem a somewhat dull and uninteresting task, but personally I have always found it to be a most fascinating pastime, and although nowadays my enthusiasm for practice may not be quite so marked as it was ten or twenty years ago, still I must candidly acknowledge enjoying even to this day an hour

all alone by myself on the links more than the pleasure of participating in the most interesting and pleasant match one can imagine. Moreover, I consider that a young player is apt to gain more knowledge in such an hour of solitude than he is at all likely to acquire in playing thirty-six holes against even the finest players in the land.

My attention was first called to the value of practice by the case of a British amateur, Mr. A. F. Macfie. As a small boy I remembered him as a player with a handicap of something like ten or twelve strokes. There seemed no great likelihood of his ever becoming a really first rate golfer, for it did not appear as if he was in any way peculiarly adapted for the game. He was not a particularly young man and moreover he was a man of remarkably slight physique, but he overcame these natural obstacles by a grim determination to conquer the game at any cost.

Eventually he did conquer it, as he won the Inaugural Amateur Championship which was held at Hoylake in 1885, defeating in the final round Mr. Horace Hutchinson by no less than six up and four to play. It was a somewhat extraordinary feat for a player who but a few years before was in receipt of a comparatively

long handicap and seemed to have nothing in his favor. He won that Championship event by the extraordinary mechanical accuracy of his game. By assiduous thought and practice he had made himself into a veritable golfing machine. Outdriven from the tee by nearly every player he had to meet, he nevertheless kept unwaveringly on his way, trusting absolutely to his mechanical accuracy, and it seldom failed him.

His success was in every way due to a determination to conquer the game, allied with the faculty of being able to spend hour after hour in solitary practice. One would see him out early in the morning and late at night, with two or three clubs and numberless balls, playing the same class of shot for hours on end. It had the appearance of being a dull, monotonous species of amusement, but he apparently enjoyed it, as he never seemed to tire of the task, and in the end his assiduity met with its due reward.

Of course America has a repetition of Mr. Allan Macfie in the person of Mr. Walter Travis. I have been told by those who know him well that in the early days of his career he would, like the Britisher I have mentioned, pass hour after hour playing individual shots

in the game; although he must have had a natural aptitude for the task he had set himself, still one cannot but think that his golfing success is in a great measure due to assiduous practice.

I have often heard such players as Mr. Travis and Mr. Macfie termed "made" and not natural players, and there is naturally much that is true in the statement. On the other hand, however, it may safely be said that literally all the leading players in the world are more or less "made" players, for although they may be blessed with natural gifts for the playing of the game and have had the inestimable advantage of learning the rudiments thereof in early youth when joints are loose and muscles supple, still the accuracy of their game is almost entirely due to hard practice and consequent knowledge and skill. They simply had an advantage over the men who commenced comparatively late in life in that they were blessed with better material to work upon, but nevertheless the finished article as represented by the great professionals is in a sense a "made" player, or perhaps it would be more correct to say a "developed" player.

There is no more remarkable example of a "developed" player than the great James

Braid himself. The original material was forceful but crude; by the aid of assiduous practice he has developed that crude material until it has become one of the most finished articles to be found in the realms of golf, and moreover without in any way detracting from the natural gifts with regard to power.

There can be no shadow of doubt that a young player holds a big advantage if he serves his apprenticeship to the game on a links on which there is a sufficiency of room to practice. In consequence, the British players who learn the game on our seaside courses are to be envied; and it is significant that nearly every British player of great note, be he amateur or professional, originally played the game on a seaside course. In this respect American golfers are under a serious disadvantage in comparison with British players, as the seaside course is practically non existent on that side. Practicing on a confined inland course is not nearly as pleasant or satisfactory as practicing on an open stretch of ground where the player can select his own particular plot on which to test and develop his theories.

On the majority of inland courses it is a somewhat difficult matter to find a suitable spot to practice iron play, as the greens committee

of any club will naturally object to any player practicing innumerable iron shots from off the fair-way of the course, and it is not particularly gratifying or useful work to keep on playing from the rough. It was not until I came to live near an inland course that I realized the comparative difficulties that many young players have to labor under, and in consequence I felt all the more thankful that I had originally served my apprenticeship at the seaside.

When I was in America the first time the fact was very much impressed upon me that in many ways the young American player was severely handicapped in comparison with the British player. First, on account of the comparative inaccessibility of the American courses, he has not the same opportunities of filling in an idle hour with a club and half a dozen balls; moreover, when he gets to the links the facilities for practicing are not nearly so great. Most of the leading British players were brought up as boys literally within a stone's throw of one or other of our famous seaside courses, and anyone acquainted with these courses can readily understand what a great advantage this is.

But where there is a will there is a way, and if a player is blessed with sufficient enthusiasm

JEROME D. TRAVERS

American Amateur Champion 1907, 1908 and 1912.
Declared by Mr. Hilton to be the best putter
he has ever seen

and that necessary ingredient, patience, he can always create opportunities for practice, even on the most circumscribed of inland courses. The mistake the young player invariably makes is to practice the shot at which he is comparatively proficient. If he is a fine driver he will take out a wooden club and drive ball after ball with it. The result is no doubt most satisfactory and gratifying to himself, but it is very doubtful whether it has been of any service to him whatever. He was already aware of the fact that he was a master of his wooden clubs, so there would seem little object in going out merely to confirm this fact. The shots a man should practice are those which he cannot usually play, the shots in the playing of which he ordinarily feels a certain lack of confidence.

It may be that he will never really conquer that particular shot, but on the other hand he may have gone a little way to remedy a marked weakness in his game. I hold the opinion that thoughtful practice of any description is sure to bear good fruit in the end; it may not even teach the player what he should do, but it may have the effect of impressing upon his mind what he should avoid.

The true secret of successful golf is accurate iron play. A man cannot be a really first class

player unless he is more or less a master of all manner of iron clubs. Deadly accurate approaching will make up for many defects in wooden club play, and, in consequence, it is the iron clubs above any other with which a player should practice. I am not going to say that it is necessary for a player to be a complete master of every class of iron shot and to have intimate knowledge of the correct way of playing them, but I will say that it is absolutely necessary for a player who is anxious to attain any great measure of success to have a good command of his iron clubs.

By this I mean that he should be able to regulate the swing of the club much as he pleases. Now there are *two natural* shots with an iron club; one is with a full, free swing, hitting the ball much as one would hit it with a wooden club; the other is the short, jerky species of approach shot which is played with a comparatively stiff wrist and forearm.

The tyro, if presented with an approach to play, will employ either one or other of these methods; they are the natural strokes with an iron club. There are many other forms of iron shots, however, which are the result of development, the strokes which lie in between the full shot and the stiff wristed approach; they are

the key note to successful approaching and are also the most difficult strokes in the game thoroughly to master. They represent the secret of being able to control the club on the upward swing to any length the player may wish.

I do not think that it comes natural to any golfer to play these half and three-quarter swing iron shots; they are to my mind the result of after development and I know one or two amateur players who have risen to prominence without ever mastering them in any way. Yet when these men come to really serious competitions their lack of such knowledge invariably proves their undoing. To be a successful first class player, a man must have a comprehensive knowledge of the correct manner in which to play these half and three-quarter strokes. I speak somewhat feelingly on the subject, as I served a long apprenticeship in the art of learning how to control the club in the upward swing.

It was a shot which did not come in any way naturally to me as I infinitely preferred to play all my iron shots with a full swing of the club, and could do so, moreover, with a goodly degree of accuracy; so it is possible I might have remained content with this method had not I had an object lesson always before my eyes in

the person of John Ball, who seemed able to control both his swing and the trajectory of the ball. I came then to the conclusion that if one man could do it there seemed no reason why another should not be able to, so I proceeded to learn the art.

It all came to me in good time; the trouble and labor were not wasted, and I have never regretted the trials I had to go through in those earlier years. Once you have attained the knack it will never desert you, and to-day I find myself possibly a better player with an iron club than I have ever been in my career owing to the fact that I have never ceased to practice.

A player may play himself quite stale by continually practicing with wooden clubs and there is really no necessity of doing so; but with iron clubs it is a different matter. To my mind a player cannot practice too much with them, and the more he practices the shots in the playing of which he is admittedly weak the better for him.

I am no great believer in the practicing of any form of full shots. In the first place, it is trying work physically and muscles are apt to become weary and tired, and toward the conclusion of the task one is almost sure to keep

foundering the ball through pure physical inertia. Indeed, one often hears a player who has gone out to try a wooden club remark on his return, "I commenced driving beautifully with this club, but toward the finish I couldn't hit a ball with it."

The failure was in no way the fault of the club; it was due to his not realizing that the continued hard exercise in playing full shots one after another had tired his muscles. Driving is a harder physical strain than many are apt to imagine.

Although it is advisable that a player should have good command of every class of iron shot, there is really only one of these shots that is absolutely essential, the playing of which he should have at his finger ends, and that is the lofting approach. It is a class of shot which can be adapted in some form or other to every approach which a player is called upon to negotiate. The power to play the low running approach is often an extremely useful asset for a player to have in his bag, as there are occasions when the playing of such a stroke is a much safer procedure than attempting to manipulate the shot by the aid of the high lofted ball.

But there are many occasions when it is quite

impossible to play this running approach. On the other hand there is hardly an approach to be found which cannot be played by lofting the ball into the air with spin imparted to it. In consequence, it is absolutely necessary that a player who wishes to make his mark should have a certain degree of mastery over this stroke. He must be in possession of the knowledge of how to pitch a ball up to the hole and at the same time impart at least a fair degree of spin to it; it is *the* most useful stroke in the game.

The man who is a master of this shot need have no fear as to his approaching; he can employ this class of shot for literally every approach he is called upon to play. A very efficacious method to employ in the task of mastering this shot is to take out an iron club which has a more or less straight face, and try to play comparatively short pitching approaches with it over a comparatively high obstacle. The result may not be altogether satisfactory to the executant, in that he may find that more failures than successes come his way, but by degrees he will become quite proficient in getting the ball to rise quickly with a straight faced iron.

It may not seem altogether a wise proceed-

ing to practice shots which one will never be called upon to play in a match, as no one would think of ever attempting to play a short lofted approach with this kind of a club. On the other hand the fruit that this somewhat unusual form of practice bears is in the fact that it is teaching the player the art of imparting spin to the ball; when he comes to play the shot with a lofted club he will find that there is not the slightest difficulty in giving the ball almost as much spin as he wishes to. After practicing with a straight faced club, the playing of the shot with a normal approaching iron will appear simplicity itself.

From the very beginning of my career I have not found the slightest difficulty in imparting spin to the ball with an iron club. The assumption is that there must be some peculiarity or idiosyncrasy in my style which is adapted to the playing of this shot, and there may be some truth in this assumption. I have an idea, though, that any such peculiarity is not natural, but the result of unconscious development due to the fact that when playing as a mere boy I was the possessor of just *one* single approaching club, a species of maid-of-all-work, with which I had to manipulate all manner of difficult shots. From a practical point of view I

should no doubt have done much better with a more complete set of iron clubs, but there can be no shadow of doubt that the apprenticeship I served with this single club taught me much of iron play, and I cannot but think that the fewer clubs a boy has in his bag the better for him, as it teaches him the difficulties of the game.

In conclusion: when practicing it is not wise to keep playing the same class of shot for too long a period, particularly if it is one which requires any degree of physical force in the playing thereof, as there is more physical strain in the making of a stroke at golf than one is apt to imagine by the experience he has of playing in matches where there is a rest between strokes and consequently the player does not realize the strain.

CHAPTER II

The Physical Side

ONE of the primary problems of golf is the exact place to be assigned to sheer strength. Like most other questions, it has two sides, and it is worth while to see how the arguments fall.

First for those against mere muscle; I once heard a Scotch professional say, "Yon man's o'er strong to play." He was referring to one of those individuals of Samson-like development, who could put the shot an incredible number of feet and who by pure muscular power lift a comparatively heavy man with one hand and hold him up for some time. There was much truth in this professional's remark, for the Goliath could make nothing of the game of golf. He could not even hit the ball a long way, for the simple reason that he was muscle bound in every limb in his body, and in consequence could not swing the club with even a relative degree of freedom.

The whole result of his most frantic muscular efforts was to push the ball a distance of about one hundred and fifty yards. I say push the ball advisedly, as his swing was nothing more or less than a species of push, a swing which took the club up with rigid muscles. He did not seem able to relax those abnormal muscles of his, and then tighten them up again on the downward swing. The mere effort of taking hold of the club appeared to have the effect of bringing his frame into an absolute state of rigidity.

I do not wish to imply by this, however, that actual physical strength is of no avail in the game of golf. If a man who is well blessed with physical power can only apply that power to its best advantage, it must of necessity be a great asset to him, as there are quite a number of strokes to be played in the game which necessitate the use of more than an average degree of strength, and the man who is not blessed with a sufficiency for the occasion must of necessity suffer. But it is better to be blessed with a comparatively limited degree of physical strength, and know how to apply it to its fullest advantage, than to have the gift of exceptional physical power, and not know how best to utilize it. In one instance,

the physical power is in excellent control, while in the other it cannot be.

If there is one muscle or rather set of muscles in the human frame which are of no use to man in the pursuit of the game of golf, they are those which act in relation to what is usually termed the biceps. No doubt those muscles have their uses in this world, for instance, one could imagine that they are particularly serviceable in the removal of pianofortes or other heavy domestic material, but for the propulsion of a golf ball, they are worse than useless, as they simply get in the way and hinder the swing of the player. That they are of little avail to the golfer is evidenced by the fact that among professionals whose physical exercises are limited to the playing of golf there is almost an entire absence of development.

Some few years ago I had occasion to receive very emphatic testimony on this point. We were discussing the question of golf and physical development consequent to it, and I expressed the opinion that not only were the biceps of no use to the player, but moreover there were very few first-class players who could claim any particular development in this part of the arm, and that the majority were

almost devoid of such development. These opinions were received with a certain degree of incredulity, not to say unbelief. Just at that moment J. H. Taylor, the four times champion, arrived on the scene, and I suggested that they should utilize his anatomy as a test.

Taylor is an exceptionally sturdy, strongly built man, looking the very embodiment of physical strength, the kind of a man one would on first sight be excused for assuming to be something akin to a professional wrestler. On the mere question of appearance, a more unlikely subject could not have been chosen by which to prove the truth of my contention, but I was not in the least alarmed, as I knew that Taylor played golf and no other game. The reply to the query as to the development of his biceps was much as I anticipated, as it came in the most emphatic manner, "Soft as butter, sir, just like a child's," and a physical demonstration proved this to be correct in every way. John Henry Taylor was almost completely devoid of muscular development in his biceps, and in this respect was only much the same as the majority of men who have made the game of golf their favorite physical pastime.

But it must not be understood that golf does

not develop the physical attributes, as in truth it is a wonderful all-round developer of physique, and in particular of the muscles at the back of the arm and those which have their resting place in the shoulders; the majority of those who have played much golf in their younger years have splendidly developed shoulder muscles. Again it develops the leg and the chest muscles; in fact, as a general all-round developer of the frame there are very few games as good as golf. Peculiar to say, the muscles that it does not materially aid are the biceps and the forearm muscles, and although many good golfers have well-developed forearms, it is to my way of thinking possible to have too great a development of forearm for the playing of successful golf.

What I do think the game of golf tends to develop is strength of sinews, particularly of those which pass through the wrists, and it is almost impossible for a golfer to be a great player without he has an average degree of strength in the sinews of the wrists. It does not necessarily mean that he must be possessed of those big, strong, square-boned species of wrists, which indicate exceptional strength in this part of the anatomy. In fact, the bone development may be slight and the wrist ap-

parently a comparatively weak example, but provided there is strength and suppleness of sinew, the player need not worry about the lack of bone. The sinews will do all that is required, and some of the longest drivers I have ever come across have had wrists which in appearance would have seemed more in keeping on the arm of a woman.

The secret of being able to hit a golf ball a very long way is freedom of action and the application of strength. To be a long driver it is not altogether necessary to be abnormally strong muscularly. Strength is useful, but not in any way essential, as is shown by the fact that many men of comparatively light physique are very long drivers, a fact which is no doubt due to strength of sinew and the ability to apply the strength they have at command. In connection with the evidence of power when hitting a golf ball, I am convinced on one point and that is that long arms are a great aid to the player, as not only do they enable him to obtain a fine, free sweep of the club, and obtain it without the use of any excessive body action, but moreover long arms are invariably set on the body on somewhat free principles, and the player who is blessed with this freedom is enabled to get his arms well away from

his body. The ideal combination for long driving is a pair of long, sinewy arms combined with long, powerful hands and fingers, and the majority of players who drive a long ball without much apparent effort are invariably thus blessed.

Of course, there are players who obtain length by other means, men who are compactly built and comparatively short in the arms, but they usually obtain their length by forcing with the body, that is, by throwing the whole of their physique into the blow. It is a forcing style of driving which is not altogether elegant and, moreover, it is a style of play which is apt to go to pieces under pressure. Again there is always a danger in connection with players who, on account of their physique, have recourse to these methods, and the danger lies in the fact that with increasing years they are naturally prone to put on avoirdupois, and what freedom they originally possessed is apt to leave them, and they inevitably lose their length.

Of all the golfers I have come across I cannot think of any who to my mind would appear as ideally built for the playing of the game as Harry Vardon. He is sufficiently tall without being ungainly; he is strong without being mus-

cle bound; and he has the strength in the correct places, viz.: the shoulders, wrists, and hands. There may be many men playing golf who are infinitely better physically developed than Harry Vardon, but perhaps none whose physique is better adapted for the game.

George Duncan is another player whose physique is also well adapted for the game, but Ray would appear to be a somewhat clumsily fashioned individual and does not in any way give one the impression of being an athlete, although he has wonderful strength and great freedom of action. At one time in his career he was probably too free in his actions, but since he has filled out into a big, heavy man, his freedom has come much more under control, and he is in consequence a more reliable long game player. Comparing his form of the present day with that when he was a man of comparatively light physique, one cannot help but think that the extra avoirdupois which has gradually appeared during the past few years has had a very sobering effect upon his swing. Many young players who are inclined to be weedy of physique would, no doubt, benefit by the addition of weight to their physique, much as Ray would appear to have benefited.

Reviewing golfers who have learned the rudi-

HARRY VARDON

The British professional who set the standard of play higher than it had ever been before

ments of the game in the States, one cannot help being struck with the fact that the four players who stand out as having made the biggest names for themselves are all men of comparatively light physique. The four I mean are Messrs. Walter Travis, Jerome Travers, Chick Evans, and MacDermott. Not by the wildest stretch of imagination can any of this quartette be called big men; in truth, one would be inclined to class them all as comparatively small men. Jerome Travers is probably the tallest of the four, but he is not by way of being a giant. Of course, it may be only a pure coincidence that the four most successful golfers in America are all of small physique, but it is nevertheless remarkable that they should exhibit more control over their clubs than the men of more commanding physique.

There is a saying that a good "big one" will always defeat a good "little one," and one cannot get away from the truth of this opinion, as, provided that both are equally gifted from the point of view of scientific application, the greater strength of the bigger man must prevail in the end. But on the other hand, it will generally be found that the smaller man has the better balanced physique, better balanced in the respect that he can control his actions more

successfully. On this assumption the small man should be the more stable and consistent player than the big man, and I am inclined to think that on the average he is; he certainly has proved himself so in the States. It is in events such as Open Championship contests that the smaller man is at a disadvantage with his stronger opponents. He may be likely to do as well as any of his opponents, for argument's sake we will say even better than any individual opponent, but on account of the limitations to his power he cannot expect with just average fortune to accomplish anything as great as that which several of his stronger opponents may accomplish. However well the smaller man may play, there is always the great chance that one or the other of his more powerful opponents may do even better, for the reason that they are gifted with greater power, and in an open event one has to defeat all opponents and not any particular individual one.

In Great Britain the Open Championship during recent years has invariably fallen to one of the big physiqued men; players like J. H. Taylor or Tom Ball, who are representatives of the accurate, scientific class of player, have a habit of finishing in second position. They suffer defeat because they have the misfortune

to run up against just *one* player possessed of greater power, who is at the top of his game on that particular occasion. The difficulty for the Taylors and the Balls is to defeat the whole fleet of these big men, and the fleet is such a numerous one nowadays. In the old days the sound, accurate golfer had a much better chance of success in the Open Championship than he has at present, as the ever growing number of powerful big hitters has had the effect of increasing the pace, so to speak, in that the players now realize that to win the Championship something more than steady play is required. One or other of the strong men is almost sure to be on his game, and the men less gifted in physique have to go full steam ahead from the very start of the event and often crack under the strain.

Aside and apart from the question of a good wrist and a good wrist action, which is undoubtedly the most essential possession for a golfer who hopes to be a first-class exponent of the game, perhaps the most useful asset is a powerful pair of hands. If the fingers are long, all the better for the player. To my way of thinking, long, strong fingers are an aid to the golfer in every way, with the possible exception of when he is on the putting greens, when it may

be an advantage to have slight, delicate fingers. But in the more powerful phases of the game, the long, strong fingers have it in every way, as they are able to control a comparatively heavy club with ease, and long driving in consequence becomes more or less a simple matter.

But it is in the real heavy work from indifferent lies that the strong fingers hold the great advantage, as they enable the player to grip the club firmly and get that quick, sharp nip into the swing which is so useful when playing from rough, heavy grass. I speak feelingly on this point, as nature gave me short fingers, and I look with envy upon men like Braid, Ray, and Vardon when they take heavy medium irons from lies, from which I would have to rest content with a niblick shot for safety. They have the combination of length in the fingers and strength in the hands, which allows them to put sufficient snap behind the shot to enable the club to come through all obstructions.

Personally I may have the requisite strength in the hand, but I am certainly not possessed of the requisite grip with the fingers, and if I attempt any of those Goliath-like feats, when playing from long grass, it invariably ends in my losing possession of the club. It is not due to the lack of strength in my fingers; it is en-

tirely due to the lack of firmness of grip owing to the shortness of finger.

One excellent physical attribute for a golfer to possess is sloping, or what are generally termed bottle neck shoulders, as there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt that the man with such shoulders is always gifted with exceptional freedom in this part of his anatomy. There are two of our noted players, viz., Mr. John Ball and Alexander Herd, who are blessed with this class of shoulders, and for freedom of swing these two are not excelled by any. The ease with which they can swing a golf club is simply extraordinary. Rather remarkable to say, both Mr. Ball and Herd grip the club in the palm of the right hand, with the knuckles pointing to the ground, and I feel assured that neither of them could employ this underhand grip and swing with such freedom and accuracy if it were not for the sloping shoulders that they possess. In swinging a golf club a square-shouldered man is, to my way of thinking, at a disadvantage in comparison with men who are physically modeled on the lines of Mr. Ball and Herd.

Although in the swinging of a golf club the upper part of a player's anatomy is admittedly a more important factor than the lower, still in accuracy of swing much depends upon the use

the player makes of his legs and feet, and in consequence a player is a good deal dependent upon the physique of his lower limbs. There can be but little doubt that it is an advantage to be strong in the legs, as strength in this part of the anatomy enables a player to maintain his balance. But as against this, many men who are abnormally strong in the legs are not a little prone to try to utilize them too much, and are not only apt to move about on their feet, but moreover are sometimes inclined to place so much pressure on the feet that there is a continual risk of their slipping. One thing I have noticed is that nearly all players who are exceedingly well developed below are inclined to take a very wide stance. This in a manner is only natural, as they are naturally inclined to obtain a more than average degree of impetus from the legs and feet.

Another point which is noticeable in connection with the general run of golfers who have played from their youth up is that they are much inclined to turn their toes up, and in a true, free golfing swing players undoubtedly utilize their toes a great deal, and moreover turn on the ball of the foot, and this tends to turn the toes skywards.

CHAPTER III

The Mental and Temperamental

THE fact should be thoroughly established by this time that there is much more to golf than the mere ability to swing the club hard and true. It must be borne in mind that this swinging must be kept up through the eighteen holes of the round and among the diverse circumstances and happenings that will occur in that round. Here is where the matter of individuality intervenes.

I heard it once said of a man, "He is a good golfer because of his wonderful temperament." There was a good deal that was true in the statement, as he played from a handicap which was lower than his style or methods of play would warrant, and, moreover, he continually defeated players who, in the matter of style and the individual strokes played, should certainly have had the best of the argument when playing against him. But with the odds from a physical point of view *most apparently* all against him, he nevertheless kept on winning

the greater percentage of his matches, much to the chagrin and bewilderment of his opponents, who could not fathom how he ever managed to do it. One of his opponents somewhat expressed the opinion of the majority when he remarked, "I cannot make out *why* that man invariably manages to defeat me, as I *can* play better golf than he does, and, moreover, always seem to be playing better golf. Nevertheless, he wins the majority of the games that we play together; it's a mystery to me."

Of course, there must be an explanation of such a case, and the obvious one is that the "mystery man" must have been somewhat unduly gifted in the matter of temperament for the winning of matches, much more gifted than the majority of golfers. But in the case of this somewhat remarkable class of players, who win matches which they apparently should lose, there is always a reason to be found for their success. A recently defeated enemy will suggest that it is mainly due to luck, and will probably stigmatize the successful one as one of the luckiest devils unhanged. But while the element of fortune does enter into the game of golf on occasions to a very marked degree, still, year in, year out, the question of good or ill fortune must very much level itself up in the long

run. Personally, I am not one of those who believe that luck has a very great bearing upon the career of a golfer, as I hold the opinion that the majority of first-class players are themselves responsible for their great success, or comparative lack of success, and are in no marked manner beholden to the distribution of favors on the part of the Goddess of Fortune. It can never be continued good luck which is the main cause of a golfer invariably winning his matches; there must be more practical reasons for his success, and, taking the case of the "mystery man" I have previously mentioned, a close study of his methods plainly evidenced that in his case it was due to the gift of extreme concentration in the playing of every shot. He never played a really careless shot, and he never stopped trying his utmost from the first tee shot to the last putt.

This power of concentration may have been a natural gift with him, or, on the other hand, to a certain degree it may have been a development, but wherever it came from made not the slightest bit of difference; he had this concentration, and the majority of those he had to meet were not so similarly gifted, and in consequence he won his matches. This ability to concentrate one's powers upon each individual

stroke, irrespective of what has occurred in the past or is likely to happen in the future, is one of the greatest gifts a player can possess and from my experience of golfers I have come across very few players who are naturally gifted in this respect.

It is true that some players that I know, without being naturally gifted in this respect, have gradually, by the aid of hard application, developed the habit of concentrating their attention upon each stroke played. This developed habit is a very excellent substitute for the natural gift, but, on the other hand, the player with this substitute is never quite in the same safe position as the player with the natural gift. In the case of the latter no trouble or effort is required to keep his mind on the task, but the former, unless the world is going very well with him at the time, is unconsciously apt to revert to his natural state and allow, if even momentarily, his attention to wander away from the task of hitting the ball.

The two grave dangers to close and absolute concentration are supplied by the possible review of incidents which have happened in the previous play in the match and by anticipation of what may happen in the future. The former is the graver danger of the two in that the mind

has a habit of wandering back more to the unfortunate and unpleasant incidents than to the pleasing ones, and the player who grieves for the past is invariably a lost soul. A grievance, even if it is a true and just one, is a terrible thing for a man to carry around with him.

The vein of anticipation is possibly not quite such an evil influence as that of reflection, but the player who cannot refrain from anticipating what may happen in the play to holes which are yet to come, and, moreover, keep on playing those holes in his mind's eye, not only anticipating how he will play them himself but imagining how his enemy may play them, is burdening himself with a deal of useless thought and consideration, as circumstances may be entirely different when the holes actually have to be played. Moreover, the imaginative sketch of what the opponent may do at any particular hole may prove to be entirely erroneous, and in consequence all the premeditated schemes will go awry.

It is bad for the player to reflect upon the past, or anticipate the future when playing in a hand-to-hand encounter, but it is infinitely worse to give rein to these feelings when participating in score play. In truth, one may go so far as to say that the giving way to such an inclination

is likely to be absolutely fatal. I speak feelingly on the point, as in my younger years I had a habit, before commencing a medal round, of anticipating the play and possible difficulties to be overcome, to every single hole on the way round. Then, when playing, say, the third hole on the way round, I would find myself imagining how I would get past some particular difficulty at, say, the fifteenth or sixteenth hole. My brain was always working away ahead, puzzling over problems for the future which might never present themselves. It was a habit which I found difficult to overcome, and I never have altogether got the better of it to this day, as I still find my attention wandering away ahead of schedule, and have to pull myself up sharply. It is the curse of an unduly anticipatory brain, and I find the greatest difficulty in reining it in, from participating in the many imaginative pictures which it will persist in weaving.

An anticipatory brain of an imaginative character is an ill possession for a golfer to be blessed with; it is not of the least service to him in any way, and it is merely prone to take his attention away from the task it should be riveted upon, which is the task of hitting the ball more or less in the center of the club face.

I know it is much easier to sit down and moralize on paper than to carry out principles and precepts when actually participating in the game, but I do believe that it is possible to develop the habit of concentration. The developed habit may not be as great a blessing as the natural habit, but to any young player who finds a difficulty in keeping his attention on the game, I simply advise him to try and see whether he cannot teach himself the knack of forgetting everything else except the particular game he is playing and the particular individual strokes he is about to play. He may find the task a trying and severe one at first, but by degrees it will become less difficult, and eventually he will find that the continued restraint on a wandering and inconsequent brain will result in the development of a habit which is the next best thing to natural powers of concentration.

When watching American amateurs play and when playing with them, I have been much struck with the manner in which they concentrate their mind upon the game they are playing. In this respect they compare more than favorably with our British amateurs, the majority of whom do not settle down to their work as the American players do. A notable

exception to this rule is Mr. John Ball, and a goodly measure of his great success may be said to be due to this natural gift of being almost impervious to the effect of outside influences. Nothing outside the incidents of the actual play seems to disturb him in the slightest, and I never remember ever seeing him stop in the playing of a stroke on account of the conduct of the spectators. He does not seem to mind in the slightest whether the spectators run about behind him like frightened rabbits, when he is playing a shot; he simply asks for room in which to swing his club, and if that is given him he rests content. I have never come across any player who appears quite as impervious to outside influences as Mr. Ball does, but the rank and file of amateur players on our side are not by any means similarly gifted.

Among American amateur players Mr. Walter Travis and Mr. Jerome Travers stand out in my mind as wonderful examples of players who can naturally concentrate their attention on their game, and who are, moreover, but little influenced by the trend of the play. The success of Jerome in the championship at Wheaton was a wonderful example of the powers of persistent concentration, under most trying circumstances, as the consistent failure of

his wooden club play was sufficient to break the heart of a man of stone. That he was himself disgusted with his efforts from the tee was most plainly evident; he did not attempt to hide it, but the remarkable thing was that it did not seem in any way to affect his subsequent play up to the hole. On the other hand, it simply seemed to spur him on to greater effort.

Many players, when hitting their tee shots as Mr. Travers was hitting them that week at Wheaton, would have been inclined to throw up the sponge once and for all, for it certainly is most distressing work having to keep on playing the odd, from all manner of unlikely places on the course. But the severe task which Jerome set himself apparently made him try all the harder. It was the pluckiest exhibition I have ever come across, as it was not confined to one round, but went on during the whole six days' play. But to my mind Jerome Travers is quite an exceptional match player; I know of none better.

But your youthful exponents of the game set about their task on more serious principles than the younger generation are prone to on this side. They are not in any way more dogged in a close finish than our players, but they commence the round in the same spirit that they

finish it. They are tryers all the way, and are just as careful and studious when they are many holes up as when they are many holes down. They throw nothing away through carelessness, they just play their best and take the chances of what their opponent may accomplish. This is undoubtedly the correct spirit in which to play a golf match. The man who wins the majority of his matches is the one who commences the round trying his utmost, and continues trying until all is over, who never allows the state of the match to influence his game in any way.

These are principles which, on some occasions, are difficult to follow, but to my way of thinking the American amateur on the average follows them more closely than his British cousin. Of course, there are notable exceptions to this rule, and I could mention at least two of your very prominent amateur exponents of the game who are apt to be very easily disturbed by outside influences, but one of them is fast overcoming this weakness, which was most evident during championship week at Chicago in 1912.

Of course, it is well recognized that the man who is successful in the game of golf is the man who can maintain an equability and equanimity of temperament from beginning to end

WALTER J. TRAVIS

"The Most Analytical Player in America"; Three Times American Amateur Champion and Once British

of the round, the species of individual who is not unduly elated by success or downcast by adversity, but one is afraid that there are very few to be found who can claim the *full* measure of these temperamental virtues. But, as I have previously suggested, I do candidly think that it is possible to school one's self into a certain spirit of philosophy, the spirit which succeeds in obliterating the past from the picture and lives only in the present. I am speaking from personal experience, as except for a certain degree of natural pugnacity which has always served to keep me fighting to the end, I am afraid that in my younger days I was not in any way blessed with the great temperamental virtues for the playing of the game of golf. I was extremely susceptible to the effects of outside influences, and, moreover, was cursed with an imagination.

I could see what *might* have happened if the world had gone differently with me at a previous portion of the round, and I could, moreover, see in my mind's eye what was likely to happen at future points in the round—in fact, I could always see the pictures of the past and the imaginative panorama of what was likely to happen in the future. But I early realized the weakness and detriment of these views and

promptly commenced to try and eradicate them. Although I have never quite succeeded in clearing them clean out of my system, I have nevertheless succeeded in developing a certain degree of the spirit of the philosopher, which has stood me in stead in many a close call. The development certainly did not arrive of its own free will; I had to struggle hard to attain that measure of philosophy, and I regret to say that I have to struggle still, otherwise I would find myself once again drifting back into the ways of my youth.

Looking back through the various experiences I have been subjected to during my career, I can readily realize how much the question of temperament has had to do with the measure of success, or ill success, which has come my way. I can realize how on occasions the laurel wreath has fallen to me through the temperamental failings of others, and I can even more fully realize how it might have come into my keeping, except for exhibitions of temperamental weakness, which were my undoing at critical moments. There is probably not a player in the world who has attempted to throw more matches away through temporary fits of inattention to business than I have.

American players will no doubt well remem-

ber the final round at Apawamis.* That was a typical "Hilton episode," a species of episode which has happened many times on this side of the water. There are occasions when I cannot keep my attention on the game, these being the occasions on which I have obtained a sufficiently commanding lead to suggest that there is little or no possibility of defeat. I have been taught the lesson so often that I ought to remember it when the occasion arrives again, but I never have learned it and probably never will, simply for the reason that it is not natural for me to keep up the tension when I hold a comparatively safe lead, and nature is too much for all my schooling.

There is only one safe way to win a match and that is to play until you have so many holes in hand that there are not enough holes left in order to enable your opponent to draw level. If every golfer played on with this objective clearly in mind, there would not be so many cases of matches simply thrown away through a mixture of overconfidence and carelessness. It may on occasions seem a little brutal to rub it in to an apparently defeated opponent, but if you give these opponents an opportunity they

* Mr. Hilton was twelve up on Mr. Herreshoff at the end of the morning round and the match finished all square at the thirty-sixth hole, Mr. Hilton winning the odd hole.

have a habit of turning round and biting, just when you do not think them capable of such an unkind act. You flatter yourself that you have them quite tamed and completely in hand, but it is wonderful how even a beaten opponent will recover both his game and his courage, just by the means of a little inadvisable encouragement. Get your opponent right under first and sympathize with him afterwards, is my advice. I cannot carry it out myself, but that makes not a bit of difference to the wisdom of the advice.

I have noticed that the majority of good match players are inclined to be very silent men, and in consequence it is safe to assume that lack of conversation is a virtue in the playing of the game of golf, and the class of conversation which should be particularly avoided is that species of running conversaziones with friends and acquaintances who happen to be among the spectators.

Learn to bear your ill fortune without appealing for sympathy, as sympathy extended to a man during the course of play is more apt to upset him temperamentally than to strengthen his purpose in any way. The most reliable of golfers always prove to be those who play the game from the beginning to the end of it with-

out allowing any outside influence to affect them in any way whatever. To some golfers it is a difficult procedure to follow out, but it is truly wonderful how a young player can strengthen his temperament by continuous schooling.

CHAPTER IV

Clubs—Past and Present

HITHERTO we have been discussing the workman rather than his tools. Now for the latter, and particularly the clubs of to-day as compared with those of the old days. In my recollection, which extends over a period of twenty-odd years, there have been many and material changes in the make and shape of the implements in use in the game. Yet, considering the enormous strides the game has made in this period of years and the countless individuals who have from time to time attempted the task of evolving some new principle in the fashioning of golf clubs which would revolutionize the playing of the game, it is truly a little remarkable that the golf club of the present day is in general principle much the same as it was twenty or thirty—in fact, fifty—years ago. Moreover, it must be remembered that these individuals with an inventive turn of mind had, until but a short time ago, an absolutely free hand.

There were no restrictions as to the make and shape of the golf club or bar as to the using of mechanical contrivances. When one sums up the whole of their deliberations we find that except in one or two minor details the golf club of the present day is much as it was away back in the past century, which suggests that our forefathers must have had at least a comparatively shrewd idea as to the most satisfactory form of implement with which to propel through the air a circular object of the size of a golf ball.

To my mind, the most radical change which has taken place in the shape of golf clubs and the one which has been most responsible for improvement in the standard of play was the introduction of the bulger, which happened some twenty-four years ago. This statement may seem somewhat remarkable to many golfers who do not remember the days when the rounded convex face was all the rage, as during recent times this form of club has gone almost clean out of position and one seldom comes across a wooden club with a true bulger face.

Occasionally there is a species of revival of the club invented by the late Henry Lamb, but the revival is never sufficiently strong to suggest that the club has come back to take its old place

in the affections of the public. The bulger, as fashioned by its inventor, is a club of the past; but one sees its far-reaching effect in nearly every wooden club which is made in the present day, as literally all modern wooden clubs are fashioned much upon Mr. Henry Lamb's idea, with the face of the club to be seen in front of the shaft.

To put the case plainly, the bulger idea brought the whole structure of the club head forward, distributing the balance more in the center of the head. To my way of thinking this alteration in the principles of balance of the wooden club has been the greatest and most lasting improvement in the make and shape of golf clubs within my recollection of the game.

The recollection which many American golfers will have of the fashion of wooden club heads which preceded the bulger stamp probably harks back to occasional glimpses of prehistoric-looking weapons with long, oblong heads, in shape much like the half of a pear, with an abnormal length of lead space at the back and with concave faces curved inward. Until about 1890 this was the general form of golf club head, and in comparison with modern-day club heads was a somewhat cumbersome

and inefficient weapon for hitting a golf ball really hard.

In those days, however, the majority of players did not attempt to hit a ball really hard, not nearly so hard as the general run of players do nowadays. This was not because they were in any sense comparatively deficient in physical strength, but for the reason that the balance of the old stamp of club head did not lend itself to hard hitting, and the man who attempted to apply the maximum of his physical powers with these clubs (or one might go further and say anything approaching the maximum of his physical power) was taking more than a great risk; he was almost courting disaster, as the mere force of the blow and the consequent quickness of the downward swing was sufficient to make the long head with the balance toward the toe of the club swing away. Mistiming was the natural result.

The really long drivers in those days were invariably very wild drivers; they could hardly hope to keep straight. The clubs they used would not allow them to. Nowadays a man can hit literally as hard as he likes without any risk of the club letting him down, and most of the first-class players are quite aware of this fact.

The game of golf twenty-five to forty years ago was more a game of scientific persuasion than sheer force; nowadays it is the scientific application of force, and for this change the alteration in the shape and balance of the club head due to the introduction of the bulger is almost altogether responsible. With the old-fashioned club it would have been quite impossible for a player to hit as hard as the majority of players do nowadays, and at the same time hope to attain even a mediocrity of accuracy; he would have been here, there and everywhere.

An improvement of comparatively recent date in connection with the construction of wooden clubs is the method of fastening the head to the shaft by the means either of running the shaft right through the head or of screwing it into the head. I believe this neat and ingenious method of affixing the shaft to the head originally emanated from America, and as a testimony to its value all club makers in the world now join the shaft and the head of the club together by this means.

Personally, however, I am not at all convinced that these socket clubs, as they are termed, are the most serviceable wooden clubs, and I am decidedly inclined to think that the

old-fashioned method of joining the shaft to the head by means of glue and whipping is the better for utilitarian purposes, as there is more stability in this class of club than in the socket club, as the latter are very often too fragile for hard work through the green. It is noticeable in this connection that the majority of the leading British professionals have at least one *scared* club in their bag.

I believe that Harry Vardon has always remained faithful to the old-fashioned method of glueing the head to the shaft, and he is probably the most accurate driver of all players. Be it said, however, that the socket club has certain advantages over its scared brother, as it is a much neater looking club and moreover is invariably possessed of a much more delicate balance, and, perhaps most important of all, the ball leaves the face of the socket club with a rather sweeter feeling than it ever leaves the face of a scared club.

I am of the opinion, however, that the latter is the sounder and more utilitarian weapon of the two, and I think many players would do much better work through the green if they would discard the socket brassey, and in its place try an old-fashioned scared club. Personally I have never had a brassey made on

the socket principle in which I had the slightest confidence, as directly one encounters a heavy lie there always seems such a risk of the shaft buckling, and the ball in consequence swinging off at a tangent.

These socket clubs are very pleasing to play with when the lie is a good one, but in such cases there seems no reason why the player should not use his driver. Of course, against my contention that the scared club is the most serviceable club of the two, there would seem to be the overwhelming evidence that nineteen out of twenty players and probably in America even a much bigger percentage than that use brassies made on the socket principle, but I have an idea in my own mind that although players may not be aware of the fact it is the club maker who really decides the manner of club they shall play with.

It is a simple task for the club maker to have the head and the shaft he is going to join together fashioned by machinery in such a manner that he has only to push the shaft through the head or screw the shaft into the head, and then wind round about an inch of whipping. On the other hand, there is a certain degree of labor in having to carefully glue the head to the shaft, then carefully file

it and finally lay on about six inches of whipping. It is not a cause for surprise that he should prefer to sell the public "socket" clubs in preference to "scared" clubs; it is a simpler method, a cheaper method and there is less labor involved.

In the selection of a club, the player should have first of all made up his mind the *lie* of club which suits him best. Some players prefer clubs with an upright lie; in fact, they cannot play with any other class of club. There are others who may be able to play with clubs with a practically upright lie, but who on the other hand find they invariably do much better with a club which in lie is comparatively flat.

In my experience I have found that the majority of players have no very definite or decided idea as to the lie of club which suits their style and physique; they invariably have some species of hazy idea of a club which they once possessed which suited them admirably, but they never seem to be able to quite recollect the exact lie of that club. They do not seem to realize that the question of the lie of the club and the way that the head sits on the ground make all the difference as to whether it will be suitable to their style of play or not.

Many a time have I seen a golfer come out of a store or shop with a club in his hands which he is convinced will suit him admirably. He has been prompted to purchase it on a question of appearance or perhaps in a certain degree on the point of feel and balance, and he flatters himself that he has gained possession of a very superior article. Perhaps he has, but his practical experience of this superior article is never satisfactory or gratifying, and he is at a loss to find a reason for this failure. If he will only take the trouble to compare the instrument with those with which he has accomplished satisfactory work in the past he will probably find that the lie of the new purchase is entirely different from those he has been in the habit of using. To anyone who has been in the habit of handling golf clubs all his life it is not a difficult matter to arrive at a fairly correct diagnosis of the lie of a club by the aid of eyesight and touch alone. Many golfers, however, either are not naturally gifted with this talent of judgment, or if so they have refused to develop it, with the result that they are very prone to make the most egregious of blunders when purchasing new clubs.

Far the best thing for a player is to assimi-

late in his mind the lie of the club which suits him best. This only requires a certain degree of study of the clubs which have from time to time suited him. Eventually he will know almost instinctively whether a club is suitable to his style or not and if he is gifted with this developed instinct it will save him from a great deal of worry, and moreover tend to retard the growth of the forest of useless, discarded clubs which nearly every ardent golfer in this world is possessed of.

The professional golfer does not exist by the sale of clubs which the golfer uses, but more by the sale of clubs which the purchaser does not use and probably never will use. I know personally that out of every six or seven clubs which come into my possession from time to time not more than one ever finds itself in my bag as a regular occupant.

If the golfer has any doubt as to the lie of a wooden club he is about to purchase there is always one way of testing its suitability, and that is to take a club out of his set and resting the head of his own club and the head of the one on approval on the ground side by side to press hard upon the upper surface of the two heads with a flat object. Then he can judge the lie of the new club by the angle at

which the shaft stands from the floor. It is not altogether an absolutely infallible test, but on the whole it is a fairly sure one.

In the old days of the scared club it was not altogether a difficult task to alter the lie of a wooden club as one had merely to sever the shaft from the head and alter the angle of the scare on the head, but it was not always a satisfactory proceeding. On the other hand, it is literally an impossibility to alter the lie of a present-day socket club since the delicate workmanship where the shaft joins the head precludes the possibility of any material alteration of the angle at which the shaft enters the head. Once one has bought a socket club it must remain as regards the lie thereof much the same for the remainder of its days.

It is, however, a comparatively simple matter to alter the lie of an iron club, as any accomplished workman will put the nose of the club in a vise, and with one or two carefully dealt blows with a wooden mallet alter a flat lying head into an upright lying head, and vice versa, if this is the change required. Again the judicious use of a file may do much for the head of an iron club, and many an unpromising, clumsy looking weapon I have seen changed into a real gentleman of aristocratic

JAMES BRAID

A British professional of the Modern Hard Hitting, Accurate School

appearance by the aid of a file and a certain degree of labor.

Personally I never buy a small-headed iron club; not altogether for the reason that I am averse to using small-headed clubs, but simply because a big-headed iron club supplies me with material to work upon with a file. I have the metal there and I can work upon it until I have got that iron head to my liking, and very few of the iron heads I have ever used have been altogether innocent of the touch of the file.

I must acknowledge to having spoilt one or two iron heads in my attempts to improve upon them, but that was in my younger and less experienced days and I have since accumulated wisdom by the light of such disasters and have learned the lesson of knowing when to "leave well enough alone."

When I select iron clubs I invariably select them with large and heavy heads, so that I can reduce them to my liking.

When I select wooden clubs I invariably select them with the face of the club showing well in front of the angle of the shaft, as then I can file the face away until it is to my liking. If there is too much of a golf club it is an easy matter to take the superfluous matter away.

If there is not sufficient of a golf club, it is not at all an easy matter to add thereto, and moreover seldom proves a satisfactory method of altering a club.

It has been said that a good shaft is a pearl beyond price and there can be but little doubt that in connection with clubs which are made of wood the shaft is the main essential toward the making of a completely successful club, and that it is of no avail to have in your possession one of the best balanced and most beautifully modeled heads imaginable without it is allied to a shaft which can do its talents justice.

It is quite possible to have a really good shaft attached to a beautifully balanced head, and yet have the result of this alliance turn out anything but satisfactory, as it may be that the head is too light to bring out the real qualities of the shaft. On the other hand, many really good shafts are not sufficiently strong for the club heads they are allied to, and in the process of the downward swing are apt to give, with the consequence that the club head is left behind, so to speak, and arrives at the ball a little later than the player anticipated.

This class of club is always a dangerous weapon, as on occasions the player will find that he will slice abnormally with it, and the

harder he tries to hit the ball the farther he will propel the ball to the right. Personally I invariably put on one side the club which develops the habit of pushing the ball out on the off side of the course; it may have been a good servant once, but there is a limit to the life of even the very finest of shafts, and a time is sure to come when it loses sufficient of its natural rigidity to fail to keep the club head in its correct position on the downward swing.

I know it is hard, very hard, to put on one side an old and trusted friend and at the moment I can speak feelingly on the subject, as in a driver which has been my constant companion for over four years is a shaft which is giving the most evident indications that it is not now strong enough for the work it has to do; every now and then a tee shot will career out to the right something like sixty or eighty yards from the intended line of flight and although the fault may in a certain degree be that of the man wielding the club, still I prefer to use a club which is a little less apt to accentuate my failings. A shaft which has once gone "weak" is always treacherous and is best put on one side.

While a good shaft will literally make any

wooden club provided the head is correctly weighted to bring out qualities in the shaft, on the other hand the very finest shaft in the world will be of no use in an iron club unless the combination of head and shaft is a happy one, and from my experience I have found that this matter of happy combination between the two integral parts of an iron club is a question of pure chance, and that on many occasions a real first-class shaft allied to an apparently beautifully modeled and balanced iron head results in a combination which as an effective weapon proves an absolute failure.

This failure is not the fault of the shaft, and moreover it is not the fault of the head; it is due to the fact that for some reason or other this particular head and this particular shaft do not hit it off as a combination. How often does one see a player performing with an approaching club, the shaft of which through continual use has become warped and bent. On a mere matter of appearance the club would appear to be just as indifferent a weapon as it is possible to imagine a club to be, but it supplies an example of one of these happy alliances which in the light of its own success can afford to laugh at the accepted principles and theories of club making.

Occasionally a player who is in possession of one of these weird, impossible looking clubs is convinced by some well-meaning friend that this old shaft of his is "done for" and that it would be wise for him to have a new shaft put in the club. It invariably happens that it was an ill day for the possessor of the club when he listened to this well-meaning advice as it is seldom, very seldom indeed, that one can get a new shaft put into an iron club that will prove as reliable or serviceable as the old and trusted friend.

I once had a vivid experience of the truth of this statement. I had an iron club with which I played all manner of shots, a species of "maid of all work" which seldom let me down. A day came when I thought that the shaft was becoming a little past its best, and in the belief that the merit of the club lay in the head I had no hesitation in having the original shaft taken out and a new one put in. The result was not at all happy, and in consequence I decided to have the old shaft resurrected, but unfortunately it could not be found; it had disappeared from the club-maker's shop, as so many apparently worthless shafts do. Well, I tried another new shaft in that head and still another until no less than eight new

shafts had been fastened into that head, but not in one single instance did the combination prove as satisfactory as the original one which I had so rudely severed.

Eventually I gave that iron head away in disgust, and the man I gave it to promptly allied it to an old shaft he had lying by, and he told me some three years afterward that never in his life had he had an iron club to equal it. It was just the question of glorious chance; I had thrown a prize away and then drawn eight blanks; he had found another prize at the first attempt. But this has been my experience all through my career, and once a player is in possession of an iron club which suits him and has done him real good service he should not tamper with it, however crooked or bent the shaft may have become, and moreover should not give it away, as he may live to repent the day. A good iron club is of more value than half a dozen good wooden clubs, as the latter are not at all difficult to replace; an iron club always is.

CHAPTER V

The Wooden Clubs

OF all the clubs used in the game, the wooden clubs are those which in almost every case receive the first consideration. This is a natural order, but probably there are many American readers who do not realize the enomous strides that have been made in recent years in this department of the game, both in the form of the clubs and in their use.

I can well remember a time when length with wooden clubs was not considered of any very great importance, and we were told as youngsters, when laboriously climbing up the rungs of the ladder, to keep straight at any cost, and not to worry about length. Perhaps at the period there was a good deal of wisdom in this advice, but in the light of latter day experience I have never been able to quite fathom exactly where the wisdom arrived on the scene, as the farther one can hit the ball the easier it is sure to make the playing of

the rest of the game up to the hole. Our friends of old, old days must have had some reason for their repeated advice not to hit hard. Perhaps it lay in the fact that the wooden clubs then used did not lend themselves to hard, crisp hitting and were only built for the art of gentle persuasion, and hard hitting meant of a surety erratic driving.

The majority of American players have probably no acquaintance with those wooden clubs of the seventies and eighties of the last century. Only the other day I was looking at a set which must have first seen the light of day between the years 1878 and 1885, and although I was playing golf at that time and must have used clubs of a similar pattern (perhaps the very clubs I was looking at, as the set is a family heirloom), still I could not believe that I *ever* played with clubs of that prehistoric mold. Furthermore I did not wonder that players in the old days did not attempt to hit a golf ball really hard. In the first place, I do not think that the club would have stood the strain, and in the second, the result must have been a colossal slice, as the shafts were thin and as supple as a piece of chewed string. The head was about five inches long and little if any over an inch across, and the lead must

have been perilously near the face of the club.

In comparison with the modern day workman-like weapon, those old clubs represented almost the limit of impossibility. I cannot imagine anything in the shape and form of wooden clubs which could appear less adapted to the task of hitting a golf ball really hard than those old-fashioned clubs. The remarkable thing is that had I been casually shown one of those clubs and been told that I once used clubs made in that model, I would have said, "Rubbish; those clubs were made before I ever played golf." But they were not, and I have the family records to prove it. I must have once used clubs of that stamp, and I can now readily realize how it is that I originally learned the game on the principle that accuracy was everything and hard hitting not advisable.

Nowadays, it is admitted on all hands, that length with wooden clubs is a great consideration in the game, and a player cannot hope to attain a very great measure of success unless he can hit a comparatively long ball. To my mind length in driving is becoming more essential year after year, and in connection with golf in our country, the example of the advantage of length was never so marked as

in the championships of 1912. It is true that the winner of our Amateur Championship, the veteran, Mr. John Ball, is not a prodigious driver, but the man he so narrowly defeated, the artizan player, Mr. Abe Mitchell, almost entirely owed his position to his prodigious driving; if he had exhibited even an average degree of control over his iron clubs, he could not have lost.

On the other hand, in the Open Championship contest, the first four men to finish were four of the longest drivers in the field, and the man who won, Edward Ray, absolutely the very longest. One of the reasons why the value of long driving is year by year becoming greater is the gradual lengthening of the courses and the added difficulties of the approaches. Nowadays putting greens are hemmed in with small hazards in order to add difficulties to the course, and they are difficult to the man who has to play a long approach up to the hole. But much of this difficulty disappears when the approach to be played is a comparatively short one and the length obtained by the long driver helps to give him easy approaches.

The present principle in connection with golf course architecture is all in favor of the long smiter. He can drive so far that many of the

hazards set to catch a pulled or sliced tee shot do not exist for him; his wildest shots career away over them, as with Mr. Mitchell at Westward Ho [1912]. It may be that the experiences of American golf do not coincide with these views and there is always Mr. Walter Travis as an example of a player who, notwithstanding certain limitations as regards length of tee shot, proved himself to be the best amateur exponent of the game in two countries. But that was nine years ago, and since that time the character of links in the construction thereof has sufficiently changed to make a material difference in the advantages gained by different methods of play. Whereas in the earlier years of this century, the comparatively short driving scientific golfer could hold his own with his longer smiting brother, that day seems to have gone by, and in the highest form of golf as represented by the leading professionals, a man must learn to hit the ball a long way, and to do that he must learn to hit it crisply.

This advice may appear somewhat strange in that it comes from a player who has never made long driving a fetish, invariably plays all his shots well within his powers of physique, and who is apt to preach against the cult of

indiscriminate hard hitting from the tee, but there is a difference between haphazard slogging from the tee and the art of being able to hit the ball sharply and crisply. Many young players are apt to confuse the two. It is not necessary to hit every tee shot just about as hard as nature will allow one. So many young players do this and when they are driving all over the course, dismiss the matter with the remark that they are off their wooden club play on that day.

On such occasions the player should hit the ball well within his physical powers; he has proved to himself that it is not his day for his usual "all out" methods, so he should wisely go into his shell and not take undue risks. When I was in America in 1911 I was never really confident about my wooden club play from the tee, and in consequence always played well within myself. Immediately I attempted to "loose out" at a ball, I seldom failed to swing the ball round off the course on the left hand side. I was being continually outdriven by the players I had to meet, and by many of them would always be outdriven, but I sternly resisted the temptation to try and keep pace with them from the tee, as I well knew what the result would have been had I

brought the extra physical pressure to bear upon the shot. I would have been in the rough on the left hand side of the course from beginning to end of the round. I was in it a good deal as it was, a fact which probably some of the critics may have noticed, but I would have been in it a good deal more, if I had not exercised restraint.

When in England in 1904, Mr. Travis expressed the opinion that British golfers were suffering from an "orgie of hard hitting" and openly suggested that they sacrifice everything to the fetish of long driving. When in America in 1911, somewhat remarkable to say, the same idea struck me with regard to many of your young players. They did not seem to value the length of a drive in the light of the effect it had on the subsequent play to the hole, but more by the number of yards their ball happened to be in front of the opposition. This view of the situation merely represents the natural inclination of youth; the young player who can stand being consistently outdriven and restrain his inclinations to "have a go" is a little difficult to find. The art of driving from the tee lies in having the necessary knowledge of your own game to be able to decide the most advantageous method of

physical procedure on any particular day. There are days when one can afford to go full steam ahead without any great risk of disaster; on the other hand, there are occasions when any attempt to hit hard will surely end in disaster and the player should learn to diagnose his own case.

Long driving is due to one thing and one thing only, and that is the application of strength. Some players are abnormally gifted in this question of physical power, and in consequence cannot help but hit a long ball; on the other hand, there are players who cannot be said to be in any way remarkably gifted by nature, who hit the ball a very long way by the scientific application of their strength. It will be found, however, that the majority of consistently long drivers who, year in and year out, maintain a greater than average degree of distance with their wooden clubs are strong men who are endowed with powerful and supple wrists.

To my mind the power of long driving is a gift. I do not mean to imply by this that a player cannot, in a greater or lesser degree, develop his powers in wooden club play, but I have never come across a player who, after being an average driver for many years, has

suddenly blossomed out to become a Hercules from the tee. In the cases I have known where a man has suddenly developed length of wooden club play, it has invariably been due to his suddenly realizing that he had been in the habit of using clubs with which he was not able to do himself full justice. It almost stands to reason that a man can hit a ball farther with a long, heavy club than with a short, light one, and it is significant that our two longest drivers in England both use comparatively long clubs with very heavy heads, the species of clubs which the average human being would find more than difficulty in wielding.

Personally, I am a believer in the use of heavy wooden clubs, as, provided they are within the control of the player's physical powers, they are to my mind much easier to play with than light clubs. The natural assumption would be that a heavy club is infinitely more tiring than a light one, but that is not my experience, as I find that I use more physical effort in my attempts with a light club with which I have prepared to hit home than I am apt to when wielding a comparatively heavy one. Moreover, it is possible to take it "easy" with a heavy club and at the same time maintain the rhythm of the swing, while with

a light club it is extremely difficult to hit lightly, and at the same time not "snap" the shot.

One well known way to obtain length is to play for what is termed the "draw"; that is, to play the shot out to the right and in the flight cause it to come swinging round to the left. There is not a shadow of doubt but that one can obtain added length by this procedure, as there is comparatively little underspin imparted to the ball, which means that the ball will roll a long way after landing. At Sandwich in 1904 Mr. Travis was playing this "draw" shot with great accuracy and effect. He did not always play his tee shots in this manner, but just when necessity called, and the way he brought these shots off was evidence of the wonderful control he had over his wooden club.

Personally, when wishing to get my tee shot away a little farther than I am in the habit of doing I always employ this method of playing for the "draw," as it is the only way I can hit a really long ball. If one is in form the carrying out of this shot is not a difficult matter, but if one is out of form it is a somewhat dangerous procedure.

Different players have different methods of playing for a draw. Personally, I always

CHARLES EVANS, JR.

A good type of the hard fighting American Amateur

stand well away from the ball, as I find that if the ball is at all close to the body, one is apt to fall forward on account of the necessarily exaggerated body movement. It is naturally necessary to face well out to the right, as the ball has to come round from that direction if it is to finish in the center of the course, but it is not necessary to turn the face of the club "*in*"; in fact, this is a fatal error, which many golfers are guilty of when trying to "pull" a ball.

The club face should be facing in the direction in which you are driving, and not in the direction in which the ball is intended to finish.

The flight of the ball is controlled by the actions of the player and everything depends upon the turning over of the elbow joint. Many people will say that one turns the wrist over, but the wrist, unfortunately, cannot turn over; it is a joint which can only bend. It is the elbow joint which turns and the wrist will naturally come round at the same time. The accuracy of the shot when playing for a draw depends upon the correct turn of the elbow joint of the right arm, but aside and apart from technicalities, *the* secret of playing the "draw" shot successfully lies with the player

himself, in that before commencing operations, he must make up his mind exactly what he wants to do, and then take care that he is standing in the right position and facing the right way, the latter not in any way a simple task. The shot must be played confidently and boldly, and with a determined and set object. The player who attempts to play this shot in a half-hearted manner is lost.

When playing in American I have noticed that a great number of young American players seemed to avoid using their wooden clubs when playing through the green and up to the hole and were inclined to use iron weapons on any occasion when there seemed the slightest risk of trouble. I am not going to say that this procedure is in any way wrong or inadvisable, as a player should invariably take the club with which he feels he has the most confidence, but at the same time it was impressed upon my mind that they evidenced a certain lack of confidence in their wooden clubs and were a little afraid to use them when the lie from which they had to play was not of the very best. I think this avoidance of wooden clubs is a mistake, as with practice a first-class player can "hoick" a ball out of an indifferent lie with a small-headed wooden club more easily than

he can with a straight-faced iron club. At least that is my experience, and it is noticeable that the majority of our leading professionals show a strong predilection for their wooden clubs, in cases where it is in any way possible to use them, and out of rough grass invariably use a spoon or a brassy.

The advantage of being able to use a wooden club when playing up to the hole lies in the fact that one can utilize the wind so much better than with a straight-faced iron club, and if a player has in any way mastered the wooden club which he utilizes for this purpose, he can more or less control the trajectory of the flight of the ball. Of course American players may use their wooden clubs more than I am aware of, but the only player I came across who played his long approach shots up to the hole with a wooden club was Mr. E. M. Byers, and he apparently was quite a master of the shot. During recent years nearly all the leading British professionals have taken to short brassies to play their long approach shots, and seldom play a really full shot with an iron club, as they find that they control the wooden club with more surety.

I do not altogether advocate the free use of wooden clubs simply because I am a disciple

of the cult myself, having all my life used a wooden club in preference to an iron club for the simple reason that I find them so much easier to swing and control. There is the further reason that nowadays all the crack players seem to be of much the same way of thinking, and what the first-class professional does not know with regard to the game which suits him best is not worth knowing.

Playing through the green struck me as the weakest spot in the armor of American amateurs, and I noticed that they took iron clubs in places where I should have had no hesitation in taking a driver. This lack of confidence was, I feel assured, almost entirely due to an inclination to be afraid of playing their wooden clubs, a fear which can be so easily overcome by practice and experience. It is wonderful what one can do with a lofted wooden club which is supplied with a good, firm shaft; it will take a ball out of the most impossible looking lie, always provided that there is no marked obstruction behind the ball, in which case an iron club is perhaps the safer instrument to use. When playing with a wooden club through the green, there is always one great essential and that is that there should not be as free a body action as in the case of

the tee shot, the player must stand firm on his feet and hit with his wrists.

In conclusion I do not think that the majority of players pay enough attention to the value of good wooden club play. Time was when it was possible to " slouch " along from the tee and keep out of trouble, trusting to an accurate short game, but nowadays one has to be up and doing from the very start, as the men who are powerful with their wooden clubs are not so desperately inaccurate as they were wont to be.

CHAPTER VI

Long vs. Short Shafts

CLOSELY allied to the main question of the wooden clubs is the subsidiary one of length of shaft. The extremely long shaft has had many adherents and probably as many opponents. Of course, the obvious argument is that the long shaft gives a larger radius of swing and consequently more power, but that is hardly the whole story.

For example, it always appears a little remarkable to see a man using a long-handled club and gripping that handle away down at the bottom of the leather. It makes one wonder why he ever had such a long shaft put in the club if he could find no use for it. But there are a great many men who thus fail to utilize anything approaching the full length of the shaft they have had put to the head of their club and there is no doubt a certain degree of wisdom in their apparently peculiar methods, as one can undoubtedly swing more

freely with a long-handled club. Moreover, such a club is easier to control when held some distance down the leather and it will be found that the majority of first-class players are not at all prone to hold the club at the extreme top of the shaft.

In a sense this method of gripping the club down the shaft is a latter day introduction in connection with the playing of the game, as I can well remember, in my younger years, being instructed to hold the club at the extreme end. In those days the majority followed this method, and it was considered the correct and orthodox thing to do, and there was a time in connection with the playing of the game of golf when players really did pay attention to these little questions of form, good and bad, and the man who altogether departed from the recognized and regular theories was looked upon as a heretic.

Personally I first wandered away from the straight and virtuous pathway, in connection with the orthodox principles of holding a club, through a mere question of chance, and I am sorry to say I have remained a sinner ever since. It happened thus: I was the possessor of just one driving club. One fine day I found myself possessed of only a part of a driving

club, as the head decided to part from its moorings, a not unusual incident in the days of the hard gutty ball. As this untoward incident happened while playing a round, I either had to use an iron club from the tee or borrow a weapon from my opponent. The latter was the policy I adopted and my opponent being a boy some years my senior, and, moreover, many sizes larger in physique, I found myself wielding a club which was very different from my own pet weapon, in that it was some inches longer in the shaft and considerably heavier in the head.

To me it appeared a particularly cumbersome club, not to say a little impossible, but I had to manage with it some way or other, and finding that it was impossible to wield it when holding it at the extreme end of the shaft, as I had been accustomed to, I had recourse to holding it short, almost at the lower end of the leather. The result was more than satisfactory, as not only could I keep quite as straight as with my own club, but, moreover, I suddenly blossomed out as a comparatively long driver. It was quite a revelation to me and from that time forth I dismissed my old theories of holding the club at the extreme end of the shaft, with a light and delicate grip, and have ever

since taken to gripping the club comparatively low down on the handle, a method which not only enables me to keep more control over the swing, but also enables me to use a much heavier club.

In a recent discussion of this question of the relative merits of long and short clubs the opinion seemed to be that comparatively short clubs were the best for the purposes of accuracy, and there was no doubt a great deal of truth in this contention, if only on account of the fact that the majority of the leading professionals do not use clubs with long shafts. What the leading professional does not know about the clubs best suited to his style of play is hardly worth knowing, and if a man can swing a short club with freedom he is wise in using one. But it is not every man who can swing either freely or truly with these short clubs, and I must acknowledge to be one of them. If I use a short handled club, I find I cannot well take much more than a half swing with it without taking the risk of losing control of the club, probably on account of my shortness of arm and inclination to be muscle bound in the shoulders. It is essential that I should use a club with a comparatively heavy balanec to force the club back on the backward swing.

The very weight of the club counteracts the comparative stiffness of my shoulder muscles and enables me to swing sufficiently long to get power into the stroke. There is, however, a danger in the using of these long, heavy clubs, and that is the possibility of the club swinging the player off his balance; if one holds the club at the extreme end of the shaft, this danger is considerably accentuated, as I found out some time ago when I lent my driver to a player in order that he might find out whether a long, heavy club suited him better than the short, comparatively light clubs he had been in the habit of using. I felt assured that the long, heavy clubs would suit him better, but the first attempt did not go a long way to prove my contention as correct. At the first drive he only just touched the ball on the top and at the second attempt the club head passed clean over the top of the ball and, moreover, his body swung round and he only just saved himself from sitting down.

This seemed somewhat extraordinary considering that the club he ordinarily used was infinitely lighter and shorter in the shaft than the one he was using. One would naturally have thought that the inclination would have been to delve into the ground with the longer, heav-

ier club. But the truth was he was holding the club at the extreme end of the shaft, thus making the balance of the club particularly heavy, so much so that it sufficed to swing him almost clean off his feet. Naturally he came to the conclusion that such clubs were not for him, but I told him to hold the club lower down on the handle and try again, and the result was sufficiently satisfactory to prompt him to use long, heavy clubs ever since. The balance of clubs differs materially and the player himself has to find out the peculiarities of balance of each individual club and the point on the grip where it is most advisable to hold it.

CHAPTER VII

Playing the Approach

APPROACH play is admittedly the very backbone of the game of golf. In a previous chapter I have tried to point out that many golfers do not lay sufficient stress on the advantages of long and accurate wooden club play, but in doing so, I had chiefly in my mind long driving in relation to the game as played by the first-class players. One must take it as granted that a player with any pretensions to be considered a first-class exponent of the game must of necessity approach with at least a comparative degree of scientific accuracy. If he cannot, even the very finest wooden club imaginable will not serve to keep him in the first flight.

To the average golfer, however, or one may go farther than this and say also the player whose game is bordering on the fringe of first class, the success or lack of success in his game greatly depends upon his approaching. It is the true key to the situation, as an accurate ap-

proach must always meet with its due reward, as once the player has deposited the ball close to the hole with an iron club, there is then no risk of serious disaster. Certainly the player may proceed to throw away any advantage he has gained, by skittling the ball about the green, but the nearer he gets to the hole with his approach shot the less chance there is of his throwing strokes away with his putter. It is easier to lay a five-yard putt dead than to lay a putt of ten to twelve yards sufficiently near to preclude the probability of the succeeding effort missing the hole.

When watching American amateurs play, I could not but come to the conclusion that the weakest part of their game seemed to be their play with iron clubs. They drove well and to my mind are better putters than the average of British players, but their iron play lacked what we term "variety." Moreover, they did not seem to have sufficient control over the club when playing the medium length strokes. I do not think the reason is far to seek, and it lies in the fact that they have learned their game and have had to play mostly over courses of an inland nature, the majority of which call for only one class of iron shot, and that is the high lofting approach.

In the majority of cases this form of stroke will suffice, and it is invariably the safer shot for the approaches on the courses which the American players have to play over. Of course the art of playing the high lofted approach is a very essential portion of any golfer's repertoire. One can do without the ability to play successfully other forms of iron shots, but every player must have some form of command over the shot which is played high in the air and drops to earth more or less vertically, there being so many shots in the course of a year's golf which must be played in this manner, and cannot be played in any other. Again, every approach which has to be played, *can* be played by lifting the ball high in the air, and I know many players who do not scruple to play all their approaches in this manner, a notable example being the well-known professional, J. H. Taylor.

He is an absolute master of all manner of lofted approaches and never on any account plays a running approach, if he can possibly help it. So much does Taylor utilize the lofted approach that many people believe that he could not play a running approach if he tried, but this is altogether an erroneous opinion, as in cases where it is extremely inadvisable or almost im-

possible to play his favorite shot, he does not find any extreme difficulty in keeping the ball down with his iron clubs. On the occasions where our championship takes place over the St. Andrews course, he occasionally has recourse to the long, low, running approach shot. But as I have previously mentioned, Taylor is an absolute and complete master of the class of approach shot, in the playing of which the ball remains in the air for the greater portion of its journey and then drops comparatively dead, and he is one of the players who is able to control the trajectory of the flight of the ball.

He can play a comparatively low shot when he wishes to do so, and at the same time impart sufficient underspin to the ball to preclude its running far when it comes to earth. It is in this respect that so many players who, like Taylor, favor the high lofted approach are apt to fail when they play this class of shot. They have but one idea in their head, and that is to lift the ball up high in the air and trust to the vertical trajectory of its flight when it is falling. The less they wish the ball to roll after it lands, the higher they try to play it. It is not at all a bad method of playing an approach when there is little or no wind and the green is on the heavy side, as the vertical trajectory in the

downward flight of the ball will cause it to drop on the green like a poached egg.

But if conditions are not favorable, there is always an element of danger in playing the shot in this way, as in a high wind the ball will be very much at the mercy of the wind and may be blown many yards away from the intended line. Again, if the ground is at all on the hard side, these high vertical approaches are apt to jump away at extraordinary angles. Any inequality in the ground will affect the ball on landing, for the simple reason that there is comparatively little underspin imparted to the ball, and an iron shot played without underspin is much like a ship without a rudder, it is at the mercy of many influences.

The correct and much the safest way to play these high lofting approaches is by imparting spin to the ball, as a ball with a strong underspin will cut its way through a heavy cross wind, and if hit truly will deviate but little from its pathway. Moreover, the pitching approach with underspin will take such a hold of the ground upon landing that it is but little affected by any inequalities in the ground. The success I attained when in America in 1911 was almost entirely due to my ability to play this form of pitching approach shot, and at the same time

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Eight Times British Amateur Champion Rated by Many as the Best Amateur in Great Britain

impart a great amount of underspin to the ball. From what I saw of American courses they are peculiarly adapted to this class of shot, as the putting greens, in comparison with the putting greens in England, are on the small side, and it is always a safer procedure to pitch the ball right upon the putting green if possible, and I found the knack of being able to impart spin to the ball extremely useful in the championship meeting at Apawamis.

There is one very simple way of imparting underspin to a ball and that is by using a very lofted club and hitting the ball hard, trusting to the loft on the club, but it is a method which is not always successful when there is any wind blowing, as one cannot control the trajectory of the flight. The true scientific method is to impart the spin by the aid of the fingers of the right hand, bringing the club sharply across the ball from right to left. The club must be held firmly with both hands and the player must remember that it is the right hand which is responsible for imparting the spin. When playing this shot many players have an idea that it is necessary to stand well behind the ball and lay the face of the club well back. This may be a useful method when it is necessary for the ball to rise quickly over an intervening obstacle, but

it is not at all necessary if there is not an obstacle immediately in front of the ball.

The safer method is to stand with the balance of the body forward and swing the club vertically, as it is much easier to bring the club sharply across the ball when the swing is vertical than when it is a horizontal one. As I have before suggested, the true art of playing the lofted approach lies in being able to control the trajectory of the flight of the ball, and the manner in which this is accomplished is by altering the position and balance of the body. If the player wishes to play a high shot he must stand behind the ball, if he wishes to keep the trajectory of the flight comparatively low he must stand forward, with the balance forward. Provided he keeps the face of the club away from him and comes sharply across the ball, he will be surprised at the amount of spin he will impart in a shot which does not rise more than twelve or fifteen feet from the ground. One thing he must remember, however, and that is that he must hit the ball firmly and crisply.

There is probably no more spectacular stroke in the game than the low approach with undercut on the ball. When it leaves the club it appears as if the ball must career past the hole, and when the ball lands upon the green there

seems little hope of it staying there, as it invariably takes a shoot forward, the velocity of the stroke precluding the underspin from taking effect immediately. But when it touches the ground for the second time, the spin becomes apparent, as the ball distinctly grips the ground, and on the third time of coming to earth there is no shadow of doubt as to what is going to happen, as the ball suddenly pulls up with a jerk, as if someone had a piece of string attached to it.

The majority of players can make a more or less comparative success of the full shot with an iron club. It is the simplest stroke in the repertoire of iron shots, as all that is required is accurate timing. There is no real question of calculation or control in respect to the swing of the club. The full shot is the natural shot with a golf club, and in consequence it must rank as the most simple. It is the " in between " shots which are the difficult ones with an iron club, the shots which require careful and scientific calculation, both as to the length of the swing of the club and the amount of force to be imparted to the blow.

There are golfers, and extremely successful ones, too, who avoid the playing of these " in between " shots in the correct manner by play-

ing as many strokes as they can with the aid of a lofted club, and taking with that club a more or less full swing. On a day when the distances they have to make with their iron clubs prove peculiarly adaptable to their method of playing the stroke, their lack of knowledge of the true method of playing the half and three-quarter shot may cost them nothing. But, on the other hand, when the majority of the approaches will prove of such a character that they are not really suited to a full shot with any iron club in their bag, that will prove a bad day for them; their lack of knowledge of the command of the club on the backward swing will be severely felt.

I once knew a first-class amateur player who, on account of the fact that he played his full iron shots much more accurately than he played his half and three-quarter shots, made up his mind that in future he would play every approach he possibly could with a full swing of the club. To attain that object, he had a set of eight iron clubs made, with graduating lofts on the face of the respective clubs. At first he found that in principle the theory was quite a correct one, but he did not remain faithful to it for a very long time, as by degrees he found himself exhibiting a strong predilection for va-

rious individual members of his set of eight, and in consequence avoiding the less worthy members. Soon he naturally fell back into his old practice of playing with four iron clubs and playing them as they should be played.

To an average handicap player, who has failed to master the half and three-quarter shot, this method of playing a club to its full value is quite a good principle, but all golfers should try to master the half and three-quarter shot. It is admittedly the most difficult stroke in the game to overcome, but the reward for success is very, very great. It is all a matter of being able to control the club on the upward swing, and so control it that this upward swing can be terminated at any time the player wishes.

The whole secret rests in the manipulation of the club with the fingers of the right hand. The left hand naturally has something to do with it, but this hand swings the club naturally and its control is such a simple matter that it can be dismissed. The right hand, however, is a particularly unruly member, as it is so difficult to stop the club on the backward swing and do so without loosening the grip with the fingers and then gripping again. If this happens, it invariably ends in the club face being turned either in or out, with the result that it comes

down on the ball at a different angle from that which was originally intended.

The iron play of the present generation of players is infinitely more accurate than it was fifteen or twenty years ago, and this added accuracy must be put down to the command which the leading players have of the half and three-quarter shots. They are probably not better natural players than the players of the past generation, but their task of controlling the backward swing with an iron club has been made comparatively simple by the interlocked grip, by which a certain number of the fingers of the right hand work with, and become more or less a part of, the left hand. In consequence this hand, the simple one to swing with, takes on a greater portion of the responsibility in the upward swing.

In the playing of all iron shots I strongly advocate the use of the overlapping or interlocked method of gripping the club, as it serves to make the task of controlling the upward swing of the club much more simple than when the hands are held in the old-fashioned method, separated from each other. The crux of the situation lies in the player's ability to stop the club on the backward swing and, at the same time, keep continued possession of the club han-

dle with the fingers of the right hand. There must be no sudden loosening with these fingers and then gripping again; there must be an even rhythm in the swing right through, and one help toward the attainment of this even rhythm is a firm grip of the club, as then there is not the same risk of the fingers leaving the club handle.

Nearly all the leading professionals play their iron approaches with a short swing and a hard, firm blow with the club, which is sometimes termed a "push shot" and occasionally by the less euphonious title of "dunch shot," this latter applying to the efforts of the players who come down on the ball vertically and finish the swing with a very restricted follow through. To my way of thinking, this method of playing iron shots is almost entirely due to the introduction of the rubber cored ball, as it would have been almost impossible to do this with the old gutty ball, which required a certain degree of manipulation to cause it to rise from the ground. The "push" shot, as played by many players of the present day, if applied to a solid ball, would result in its keeping very, very close to Mother Earth.

This push shot is in reality a long, firmly played wrist shot. The player must stand with the balance well forward, and right through the

stroke must keep firm on his feet, the grip of the club must be firm and tight, and the body must not sway. It is a little difficult to say exactly how long the backward swing of the club should be, but the majority of the professionals seldom take it back beyond the vertical position.

One of the great secrets of successful iron play is to stand firm on the feet when playing the shot, and in particular to keep the heel of the right foot firmly on the ground. There are certain classes of long approaches which have to be played with a comparative degree of body action. For instance, one cannot play a full cleek shot absolutely stock footed, that is, with the heels glued to the ground, but from experience I have found that the best and most accurate iron players are those who stand extremely firm on their feet and trust to the swing of the arms and wrists.

To my mind there seems little object in attempting to hit a long ball with an iron club, as the object of iron clubs is surely in the cause of accuracy, and not in the cause of length, and one can invariably hit the ball just as far as one wants by standing firmly on the feet and employing a three-quarter swing. Personally I always try to avoid playing with an iron club with which I have to force the shot. I infinitely

prefer to take a club with which I can comparatively easily reach the hole and play for a spot beyond that hole. If I hit the ball absolutely truly I will probably finish beyond the hole, but I do not mind that, as it is just as easy to putt from beyond as from the near side.

On the other hand, if I fail to hit the ball exactly as I meant to, I am surer to be near the hole than if I had originally played the shot to just reach the pin. The besetting sin of many players is that of underclubbing. They do not seem to mind being short of the pin, but simply loathe seeing their ball go beyond it. Play to be up to the hole with your approaches and chance the probabilities of going too far is advice which I always try to follow myself, as I have reason to know its value, through experience gained in playing against those who invariably follow this principle. I am afraid of the man who plays to be up to the hole at any cost.

CHAPTER VIII

"Getting Up" on Winter Greens

THERE is no time when the error of approaching short becomes so glaring as in the winter. This is peculiarly true in England, and probably applies more or less in the States. Unless there has been a wet and uncomfortable summer the links with even a surface of most unpromising clay will stand the strain of the conditions prevalent in the early days of October comparatively well, but, by the time November has fairly set in, any suspicion of firm, hard condition has almost entirely disappeared. The worms are freely at work, and playing the game of golf now has become a more trying and difficult problem than has been the case for many months past. The topped shot does not go careering gaily over a hard, baked surface in its passage over the ground; it meets with obstruction after obstruction, and instead of progressing up the course a matter of 150 or 160 yards, as more often than not it does in the summer months, it will suddenly come to rest when it has traveled half that distance.

It does not pay to hit the balls along the floor, when inland courses are in their winter clothing; it is much safer to keep the ball in the air, for there is infinitely less resistance there. Even taking into account the element of fortune in the way of lies, good, bad, and indifferent, all of which are obtainable in the winter months, it perhaps may be truly said that golf under such conditions supplies a far better test of accurate play than it is prone to do when the ground is hard and baked, as it so often is in July, August, and September. On a heavy course one has to hit the ball truly, or it will not travel, and the player must impart a certain amount of carry in the case of every shot.

There may be occasions when it is possible to run a shot up with an almost positive certainty that the ball will be fairly treated on its way to the hole, but those occasions do not present themselves very often, and the man who does try to play his approaches by running them up to the hole side is invariably taking a great risk of the ball meeting with some soft, clinging obstruction which will sufficiently hamper its progress to leave it yards short of its intended destination. In fact, he is asking for trouble, and has no right to complain if it happens to come his way.

When the ground is heavy and yielding there is, to my mind, only one safe method of approaching, and that is by pitching the ball right up to the pin. If the club is sufficiently lofted and the ball correctly struck, it cannot possibly roll far after it has landed on the putting green, even if the green does happen to be close cut and, in consequence, keen. The more vertical trajectory in the fall of the ball will cause it to remain very near where it has landed. When approaching a putting green which is surrounded by heavy, clinging ground, not devoid of worm casts, make sure and pitch the ball on to the green, and not just short of it.

It is better to pitch it well on to the green in preference to taking the risk of its landing on the ground immediately in front. A lofted iron shot which lands on the fairway of the course seldom rolls more than a foot or two, and, moreover, invariably manages to collect a certain amout of the subsoil on which it has happened to land, and playing a little run up shot from the edge of the green with a ball which has a plentiful degree of earth adhering to it is apt to make the game a little more difficult than there is really any necessity to make it. The less risk one takes of inviting earth to adhere to the ball the easier the game will, in con-

sequence, become, and one of the ways to avoid this risk is to make sure that approaches will land right on the putting green.

Even if the ball goes over the green, it is no worse being off the green on that side than it would be if it was short. In fact, it is perhaps better to be over the green than short of it, as the lies to be obtained there are generally more satisfactory than on the ground short of the green, owing to the fact that there is less traffic on that portion of the ground and, in consequence, less likelihood of the ball landing in any slight depression in the ground caused by another player's footgear. But in the winter months when the ground is soft and heavy, how many approaches does one witness played past the hole? Not fifteen per cent. of shots played to be up to the hole reach their destination; in fact, if one said ten per cent., this estimate would not be far wide of the mark.

To prove this contention I once asked a golfer during the course of a competition on an inland links, which at the time was exceedingly heavy, to stand near a particular hole and mark the percentage of approaches which were played past the hole. The summary of his investigation was that he had seen twenty-six players approach the green; in these twenty-six attempts

only one ball finished past the pin, and in this case finished so far past that there was more than a grave suspicion that the player had attempted to loft the ball and had only half succeeded.

After playing all summer on hard, fast ground it is a little difficult for a player to make up his mind to hit his approaches sufficiently hard when the ground has changed to the heavy, clinging order, and although he may have thoroughly realized the altered conditions, he will still invariably find himself short of the hole: Shot after shot, time after time, he may make up his mind that for the remainder of the round he *will* be up to the hole with every approach, but he will inevitably find that although his purpose and determination may be great, his mental and physical powers will not respond to the call.

This being short of the hole when approaching the green is one of those little weaknesses in golfing life which it is difficult to understand. No amount of experience seems to be of any use to the player. He may, after one or two very severe lessons, manage to hit up to an odd hole or two, but he is, almost of a certainty, sure to drift back into the old state of affairs. The man who will make up his mind to play

his approaches for a position past the hole, when the conditions of ground are heavy, will of a surety win a very large percentage of his matches. Not that he will of necessity be often past the hole, but for the reason that he will less seldom be ludicrously short of the green.

CHAPTER IX

Putting and Putters

ASSUMING that we have now acquired the mental habit of at least trying to be up on our approaches, what happens after we are on the green? It is an axiom of the game that more matches are won or lost on the green than anywhere else. In the light of this fairly obvious fact, it is a little remarkable to my mind that among the really first-class players there are so few who can be accorded the credit of being consistently reliable putters. In fact, I do not think it can be said of any of the great players that their position in the golfing world is largely attributable to their brilliant or consistent accuracy when performing upon the putting greens. In truth, some of them have the unenviable reputation of being extremely indifferent wielders of a putting instrument, as, for example, Harry Vardon and Mr. Ball. In neither of these cases, however, do I consider that the evil reputation they possess with regard to throwing strokes away on the

FRED HERRESHOFF

A Consistent American Amateur; Runner-up to Mr. Hilton in 1911

greens is altogether thoroughly deserved, even in the case of Harry Vardon. Although Vardon can miss the most infantile looking putts and miss them in the most feeble, weak-kneed manner, still he is, to my way of thinking, an exceedingly good approach putter. In the longer distances he seems to have a most excellent idea of distance and strength, and moreover seldom fails to give his ball a chance.

Putting does not seem to present any great difficulty to Vardon provided the ball is far enough from the hole to enable him to strike it firmly; it is when the ball is very near to the hole side and he has to strike it gently and, so to speak, try to caress it into the hole, that Harry Vardon's hands and Harry Vardon's putter seem to get at loggerheads, and the result is disastrous, sometimes almost tragic. It is the very short putts which defeat him, and his methods of playing them are rather apt to suggest that the touch in his hands and fingers is not of a sufficiently delicate character to enable him to play these shots which require a very gentle tap with anything approaching confidence. Harry Vardon is a peculiarly pleasing player to watch, none more so in the long game, but the shorter the shot which he has to play, the less elegant and pleasing do his methods ap-

pear until when he comes to play the most physically delicate of all strokes, viz. the short putt, he cannot by any means be termed an elegant performer.

It might not be altogether unjust to suggest that his methods have then degenerated to a stage of inelegancy. Mr. Ball earned his reputation as a really bad putter many, many years ago, when he had days when he could miss short putts by a wider margin than I have ever seen any golfer miss them, and although he still has a habit of missing wee, short ones, this failing is not nearly so marked as it was in his more youthful years. But the reputation as a misser of short putts still lives with him, and when he is seen to miss one in an important event, someone is almost sure to say, "Hello, there's Johnnie up to his old tricks again."

But nowadays Johnnie Ball may be termed quite an average good putter, and at the Amateur Championship Meeting at Westward Ho in 1912 he was holing out consistently well, and his success was in a great measure due to the work with a new aluminum weapon he was handling, which by the way was quite a new introduction to his bag of clubs. At Westward Ho he was putting with the confidence begotten of a new putter, the failings of which he had not

yet had time to become acquainted with, and the man possessed with that species of confidence is always a most dangerous enemy to meet.

But evil as have from time to time been the reputations of both Mr. Ball and Vardon as performers upon the putting green, neither reputation was probably quite as wicked as that enjoyed by James Braid some years ago. And it was a reputation undoubtedly well deserved, as about fifteen years ago Braid did not seem to have the faintest idea of how to coax the ball near the hole when he was playing a long putt. Some of his efforts to hit the ball straight for distances of eight to twelve yards were absolutely ludicrous. I well remember meeting a player coming away from watching Jimmy perform in an Open Championship at St. Andrews, when the reason he gave for deserting the big man was that he could not stand watching him play any more, as his attempts to putt were simply heartrending. Finally he remarked, "That man's putting is nothing more or less than a sin and a crime." Still, Jimmy Braid finished third in that championship. However, Braid buried that so-called criminal reputation some years ago, and two or three seasons back he was certainly one of the most consistent putters playing golf.

Taylor has never been looked upon as an extremely brilliant putter, but one would distinctly call him a reliable one and one who knows how to hit the ball firmly. On the other hand, Sandy Herd would have been a much more successful player if he had learned the lesson of always being up to the hole, as his besetting sin is just hitting the ball sufficiently hard to reach the hole, and if anything goes wrong on the way there, the ball is almost sure to finish short of its destination. Herd has a habit of trickling the ball up to the hole side, which some critics consider is a very reprehensible one, and in favor of a firmer form of putting they will quote the old saying, "Never up, never in," which is an argument which it is impossible to refute.

On the other hand, however, quite a number of putts are missed through the ball being struck too firmly, the species of putt which catches the hole and swerves out. In these cases a slightly less forcible method of hitting the ball would inevitably have resulted in it dropping into the hole, so there is something to be said in favor of this tender method of trickling the ball up to the hole side, in that many a putt played this way will, notwithstanding that it is not hit quite straight, drop into the hole, when if it had

been played more firmly, the ball would inevitably have failed to do so. However, I do not in any way wish to advocate this method of playing the putt to drop into the hole, even although I admit that I am very likely to do it myself. There can be no doubt that, taking all manner of putts into account, it is advisable to play the shot boldly for the back of the hole, and I only wish that nature had gifted me with the inclination to follow this principle.

Perhaps the three best putters among the ranks of the professionals, at least among those who have claims to be considered first class, are Tom Ball, Jack White, and James Sherlock, and it would be a little difficult to say which has the right to be considered the most consistent performer. Perhaps one would be inclined to suggest that, week in, week out, the distinction belongs to Tom Ball, who is moreover a putter who can be relied upon to give of his best in an important event.

Among British amateur players of the first rank, I do not consider that there are any players who can quite compare with these three, and we have certainly no amateur in England who can be considered as good a putter as was the late Freddie Tait, who had few superiors, if any, in this phase of the game. If we want

to find an amateur whose form on the green may be considered quite on an equality with that of the best professional exponents of the art, we must certainly turn to the United States, where we find in Messrs. Walter Travis and Jerome Travers two of the finest putters that have ever handled a club. Mr. Travis is probably not quite as successful a putter as he was wont to be about the time he won the British Championship, for he was quite a phenomenon in those days, but his young compatriot is truly a great man with his "Schenectady" in his hand.

I think I would sooner back Jerome Travers to hole a difficult putt than any living player that I know of. It is not that he holes the very long putts such as the late Freddie Tait was in the habit of doing, or as Mr. Travis did at Sandwich in 1904. It is the class of putt which is usually missed three times out of four that Jerome Travers has a habit of holing, the putts of from three to five yards, and not only does he put down a very big percentage of this class, but he always looks as if he expected to hole them.

Whether he would be quite as deadly with any other putter as he is with a "Schenectady" is an open question, as his present methods are so peculiarly well adapted to the center shafted

club, but with practice I feel assured he could putt well with any shape of club. But altogether I do not consider that first-class players compare at all favorably with their less gifted brethren in the matter of putting. They may not be worse putters, but they are probably not any better than the despised second-class men, and one cannot get away from the idea that they should be better.

CHAPTER X

Improvements in Play

HAVING passed in brief review the important phases and attributes of the game in some detail, it is worth while taking a bird's-eye view of the game as a whole, particularly with reference to its present state and tendency as compared with other days. The golfers of old will tell one that golf is not what it used to be, and I for one am not going to gainsay them in this opinion, as the Royal and Ancient Game has changed materially in many ways the past forty years. Although the changes which are so evident may not meet with the approval of some of the older school of players, it might not be altogether unjust to suggest that their views are possibly inclined to be tinged by prejudice, the result of a natural affectionate adherence to the traditions of their youth.

From a playing point of view the game of golf is certainly not what it used to be, for the

simple reason that the playing of the game has proceeded through an era of development which has sufficed gradually to bring it to a state of perfection which would have been considered almost beyond the bounds of possibility thirty years ago. A certain element of the older school of players would stoutly deny the accuracy of this statement and cite young Tommy Morris and Alan Robertson as golfers who were quite the equal of the Vardons and Braids of the present day.

It is a point on which I am personally not in a position to argue, as I belonged not to this earth when Alan Robertson was alive, and was an infant in swaddling clothes when young Tom was in his prime. But I am in a position to form a comparative judgment between the players who flourished in the eighties and those who are at the top of the tree in the present days, and even after allowing for the advantages which present day players enjoy in the matter of rubber-cored balls, more scientifically balanced clubs, and infinitely better kept links, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that the play of the leading professionals of the present day is three to four strokes per round better than that which the professionals of twenty to thirty years ago were in the habit of exhibiting.

I am not going to say that the great men of the present day are finer natural exponents of the game than were the giants of old. Young Tommy Morris, for instance, was undoubtedly a wonderful genius in the playing of the game; he was far ahead of his fellow players—perhaps farther ahead than any other player has been in the history of the game. And again we have wee Bennie Sayers still holding his own comparatively well with his younger rivals, and he is a player who was considered to have been at his best some twenty to twenty-five years ago. But even granting that these old time players were gifted with an equal degree of genius to that which Vardon and company possess, it cannot do away with the fact that they did not hit the ball with as consistent accuracy as the leading professionals are in the habit of doing nowadays.

The reason why the game is played so much more accurately nowadays is entirely in the fact that there has been a gradual development in the general standard of play. From time to time a player has arisen who has played just a little bit better than his fellow golfers; he has reigned supreme for a season or two, and then one or two of the more gifted players have gradually worked their game up to the new

standard; and so it has gone on from time to time until the general standard has arrived at a degree of excellence which it seems improbable that any mortal golfer can materially improve upon.

There appears but one chance of such a prodigy arising in the land, and that would seem to lie in the person of a player who was sufficiently physically endowed to outdrive any of the present generation by a distance of thirty to forty yards, and who at the same time could putt with the accuracy and finesse of a Walter Travis or a Jerome Travers. This is the one hope, as to my way of thinking the iron play of the present day "professor" cannot possibly be improved upon. Their continued accuracy with iron clubs is astounding.

To Mr. John Ball belongs the credit of being the first one to set an example to his fellow players; as he set up a standard in connection with amateur golf which had never previously been approached and it was this standard of play which was mainly responsible for the amateur talent of a period of some seven or eight years, being almost, if not quite, on a par with that of the professionals. Previous to the advent of Mr. Ball there was never considered the slightest probability of an amateur ever winning

the Open Championship, but he defeated the whole fleet of professionals in 1890, and the feat was twice again accomplished by an amateur during the next six years. In fact, at that time the play of two or three amateurs was very much on an equality with that of the professionals. Amateur golfers nowadays probably play just as well as they did in the period mentioned, but they are not nearly so successful when opposed to the professionals—for the simple reason that the play of the latter has improved enormously.

J. H. Taylor was the pioneer in this movement of raising the standard of play. He arrived at the Championship Meeting of 1893 almost unknown; he left that meeting the most discussed player in the Kingdom—not that he won the event, far from it, as after a brilliant start he broke down badly—but the accuracy of his wooden club play and approaching—the latter in particular—proved a revelation to the critics who had never seen any player shoot so straight for the pin. On his very first appearance in a championship John Henry Taylor set up a new standard; he, like Mr. Ball, was simply a natural born genius who had not to go through the trials of learning the game.

For a year or two Taylor was the only one

who lived up to the standard which he had set himself, but with the example in front of them others were working their way forward, and finally Harry Vardon caught up to the Westward Ho player and eventually surpassed him. It is more than probable that Vardon would never have developed his game quite as quickly as he did had he not had Taylor and the new standard to spur him on. By degrees Harry Vardon developed a fresh standard of play which was greater than that achieved by Taylor, and for a few years he absolutely reigned supreme; there are those who to this day consider that the game played by Harry Vardon in 1898, 1899, and 1900 has never been equaled by any living player and probably never will be.

With a gutty ball he was undoubtedly far and away the greatest player who has ever handled a club. Whether he was a much better player than he is nowadays is a problem which can never be satisfactorily elucidated, as the playing of the game with the rubber-cored ball differs materially from that which was played with a gutta percha ball. Vardon himself recently expressed the opinion that his game of the present day suffers in comparison with that which he used to play to the extent of four strokes in each round. While one must have

respect for Vardon's opinion, nevertheless it might not be unjust to consider that the suggested disparity of four strokes may incline to the extravagant side, as four strokes to a player of Vardon's class means an enormous difference, and would moreover be inclined to suggest that the general average play of the other professionals is nowadays not as good as it was ten years ago.

That I cannot believe is true, for although I am not going to say that the golf played in the present day is on the average in any marked degree better than it was twelve to fourteen years ago, still I cannot think there has been any retrograde movement, and at the present moment there are certainly many more really first-class players than there were in the days when Vardon was at his prime.

The great development in the playing of the game occurred in relation to amateur golf between the years 1887 and 1897. For professional golf it lasted from 1893 to 1900. The standards set up by Mr. Ball for amateur golf and by Vardon for professional golf have never been improved upon.

It is possible to give many reasons to account for the improvement in the standard of play. Some will tell you that it is mainly due to the

more utilitarian species of clubs that we use nowadays, and there can be but little doubt that the present day model of club with its comparatively short, compact head is a much more serviceable weapon than was its long, narrow-headed predecessor. As I have said in a previous chapter, the main improvement in the modeling of clubs was, to my way of thinking, due to the introduction of the "bulger," which is the forefather of the present day wooden club. It was just about at the same time that the general standard of the playing of the game began to evidence a marked improvement.

However, I cannot think that the improvement in the make and shape of clubs has in any great degree been responsible for the manifest improvement in the art of playing the game. I am distinctly more inclined to accord the credit to the players themselves, and in doing so I am not going to imply that the men of the present day were in any way gifted with greater natural genius than, say, young Tommy Morris.

The player of the present day has worked out his own salvation by following the precepts and principles set up from time to time by certain individual players, who by the aid of great natural genius (which genius has been unhindered and untrammeled by traditional principles)

have served to produce a class of game which was superior to the finest standard exhibited in the past and by degrees other players have worked their game up to this standard. In their case the latent talent was present, but did not come to light until they were supplied with an incentive, and such men as Mr. Ball among the amateurs and J. H. Taylor among the professionals, both of whom can be classed as "natural geniuses" in playing the game, served at different periods to supply this necessary incentive.

I am not sufficiently intimate with the early days of American amateur golf to compare correctly the form of fifteen years ago with that of the present day, but from what I know of the British players who were a power in the land in the early days of the game in the States I can only arrive at one conclusion, and that is that the standard of golf as played by amateurs in the United States at present must be immeasurably superior to that played twelve to fifteen years ago.

One cannot get away from the fact that the improvement in the standard must in a very great degree have been due to Mr. Walter Travis. It is a little difficult to compare Mr. Travis with the men who were responsible for

the improvement in the standard on this side of the Atlantic, as Mr. Travis is essentially what is termed a "made player," in that he studiously and carefully worked out the theories and principles of the game until after some years' hard and persistent application he evolved a game which was superior to that previously played in America.

On the other hand Mr. Ball and Taylor made their debut in first class golf fully equipped for the battle, and were probably at that time just as fine players as they have ever been in their long careers, in truth, it is said that Mr. Ball has himself expressed the view that he was as good a player at fourteen years of age as he has ever been in his life, and it is on record that at that age he finished in fifth position in the Open Championship at Prestwick, a wonderful testimony to his natural genius for the game.

However, because Mr. Travis had of necessity to evolve his game by assiduous practise, it does not in any way alter the fact that he has been of wonderful service to the game in America, as he set up a standard which had never previously been approached by amateur talent and the effect is now to be seen in the numerous young players who have either

equalled or nearly approached that standard. But, and this is a big " but," I have never yet seen an American amateur display form which for continued scientific accuracy excelled that which Mr. Walter Travis displayed at Sandwich in 1904.

In what particular respect the standard of play has improved is a somewhat discussed subject, and one on which authorities are inclined to differ. Personally I hold the opinion that the leading players of the present day are more accurate exponents of the game in every department thereof, except that which applies to the play near the holeside, and in that extremely important phase of the game I do not consider that the general standard of play is as accurate or convincing as it was in the days of old. This is all the more remarkable in that the art of putting should be so much more simple than it used to be, as the putting greens of the present day, with the care and attention bestowed upon them, are much less difficult problems, than the natural putting greens one had to roll the ball over in the old days.

With the improvement of putting greens the true art of putting seems to be gradually disappearing and the more true does the surface of the ground and the texture of the grass become,

the more inaccurate the standard of putting appears to be. Indeed, among our very first-class players on this side there is not a single one who can be termed a brilliant and reliable holer out, and certainly none as good as Messrs. Travers and Travis.

Why the general standard of the art of putting should have degenerated is a little difficult to understand. The only explanation would seem to be that nowadays, with the beautiful greens we have to play over, there is no necessity to practise and seriously think out the problem of finding the way into the hole, and there can be no shadow of doubt that putting is not practised in the same degree as it was, say, twenty to thirty years ago.

The young player of the present day views this phase of learning the rudiments of the game as quite an unnecessary and, moreover, a somewhat tiresome procedure.

The player of the present day is a longer driver than the player of the past generation, for he has found out that it is quite possible to hit the ball very hard and still cause it to fly comparatively straight. When I first commenced to take a serious interest in the game I was led to believe that hard hitting and accuracy were two incompatible phenomena, and

this was quite an accepted theory at that time; but the present generation of players has proved this to be a complete myth, as the first-class professional not only hits his tee shots infernally hard, but, moreover, extremely accurately.

No doubt in this task he is materially helped by the present shape of wooden club head, for the old form of weapon was a somewhat impossible instrument with which to "let go." But it took years before the "don't press" theory died out altogether, and although the cult of hard hitting may nowadays have been carried somewhat to excess by the younger generation of players who are inclined to sacrifice everything for length, still it is not a bad thing to learn how to hit the ball really hard, as then one can always leaven down the amount of force to be applied; while on the other hand the player who has initially learned merely to pat the ball along with his wooden clubs invariably finds it a difficult task to learn how to hit really hard.

He has modeled his style on what are termed "pat ball" methods, and such a modeling seldom stands the strain of the application of greater force. In the game of golf it is a much simpler task to dilute the gift of power than to

strengthen up the natural or acquired lack of it.

In the art of iron play, the golfer of the present day is more accurate than his predecessor, and it is the improvement in this accuracy which is probably the main reason for the raising of the general standard in the playing of the game. But I have already dealt with this question in another chapter.

Why golfers play more accurately than they used to is to my way of thinking due to the fact that they have studied the principles of the swing of the club and the question of the control of the club. In the days of old, it was considered the correct procedure to swing the club away round the back of the neck until the head was plainly visible to the left eye. The majority, however, could not swing it thus far without either breaking the swing on the way back and thus losing the true rhythm of the swing, or else employing a gymnastic effort termed "ducking at the knees." During recent years the majority of players have curtailed the length of their swing, particularly in connection with their play with iron clubs, and this has resulted in a greater degree of accuracy with no loss of power whatever.

CHAPTER XI

The Clothes for the Game

IT is proper that the final chapter should be given to the minor, but none the less important question of clothes. Golf has always had its own standards in this respect, changing from time to time to be sure, but still reasonably firm in the fundamentals.

When American players first came over to play on courses in Great Britain, some of them caused a degree of interest, not to say consternation, by appearing on the links minus their coats and vests, and it must be said in their favor, minus what they term in the States, their suspenders. This free and easy method of clothing for the links did not in any way meet with the approval of the older school of golfers in England, who had been brought up in a certain spirit of decorum that had been handed down to them by their forefathers from time immemorial. According to this tradition the correct garb in which to play the game of golf should be composed of a complete suit of more

or less thick tweed, with footgear of a sufficiently ponderous character to correspond with the aforesaid heavy clothing.

This was the traditional garb, and tradition in connection with the game of golf is a hard taskmaster, at least it was in those days, and it was many years before the golfing public became acclimatized to a more rational form of garb in which to play the game. But by degrees the mind of the general golfing public has become sufficiently broad and independent to do away with many of the old set formulas or restrictions with regard to the golfing clothing, and although it is not yet customary in England to play coatless as American players are in the habit of doing, still it is not altogether unusual to see members of the younger generation of British players imitating their American cousins, particularly on such occasions as the summer of the year 1911, when the thermometer kept in the vicinity of ninety day after day. One cannot get away from the fact that in the hot summer days the methods of American players in playing the game with a minimum of covering is infinitely more rational and according to the views of common sense than the old time principles of playing in thick tweeds and heavy brogues to match.

But, notwithstanding the broader, and more enlightened views of the present day, one cannot ignore the fact that there still lurks in the minds of the golfing public a certain degree of prejudice against what I once heard a disgusted old time golfer term " The half naked stage." This is particularly noticeable at a championship meeting, when one would be considerably surprised to see a British player performing in the event in what may be termed regulation lawn tennis costume. Why this should be so is a little difficult to understand, as the Britisher plays most other games with as little clothing to hamper him as is consistent with respectability, but the old time prejudice is difficult to eradicate, and it undoubtedly supplies a serious drawback to American players who come over to play in the British Championship events.

One could not but feel sorry for young " Chick " Evans in 1911, when in order not to hurt British susceptibilities, he played right through the week in the sweltering heat in a comparatively thick tweed coat, and there cannot be much doubt that this act of courtesy toward British custom served to handicap the Chicago youth. Only once did he part with his coat, and that was in sheer desperation when he found himself in an almost hopeless position

at the nineteenth hole—being bunkered badly beyond the green. Just for that last despairing effort he shed the garment which had been hampering him from the very start, and I do not think anyone would have blamed him had he discarded it somewhat earlier in the fight.

Personally I do not see why American players should be expected to depart from their home customs when playing in England, as it is undoubtedly a handicap to them to be called upon to play in their coats. I have realized this more since my visits to America, where not only in the States, but in Canada fully ninety per cent. of the players play the game minus their coats, and in their climate it is admittedly the most rational and sensible thing to do. This question of golfing clothes is merely a matter of custom and habit, and in this respect it is merely a question of what the player himself is accustomed to. If a man is in the habit of playing in a coat, and moreover, wears suspenders in order to keep his nether garments in place, he will at first find great difficulty in swinging the club correctly if he discards them. I tried the experiment myself in 1911 and 1912 and came to the conclusion that it would take me days to become accustomed to the feeling of unusual looseness and freedom. I could not

control the club on the upward swing, or control the body on the downward swing, with the consequence that by the time my club head had reached the ball, my body was away in front of my hands, the result being that I pushed the ball away out on the off side. The task of trying to counteract this somewhat natural failing proved a too severe one for me to continue the trial, and I promptly gave it up as a bad job, and donned my coat once again. My American friends told me that I would soon get accustomed to the change, but I saw the prospect of losing all my confidence if I pursued the task. It is interesting, however, to note that such an authority as Mr. Walter Travis holds the opinion that it is better for the player himself to wear both a coat and suspenders as it enables him to control his actions better than he can when both are discarded, and one may rest assured that Mr. Travis has seriously considered the subject from every point of view, as he is one of the most analytical members of the golfing fraternity I have ever come across. He is one of those players who has a reason for everything that he does, and in consequence his opinion is always worthy of great consideration.

Personally I am inclined to agree with Mr.

Travis, in the matter of wearing suspenders in preference to a belt. I always wear suspenders myself, and while I find that they do not materially restrict my freedom of movement, on the other hand they prove a decided support and stay, in that they preclude the probability of the body swaying back with the club on the upward swing and obviate the possibility of dropping the right shoulder on the downward swing.

Mr. Travis is apparently one of the very few who follow this custom in America. On the other hand, I think it would be found that the great majority of British players utilize suspenders in preference to a belt, and the comparative few who follow the latter custom are no doubt chiefly recruited from the cricket field and the tennis courts. There is one point in connection with the clothes which a golfer should most advisedly wear, upon which I hold, through the light of experience, most decided opinions, and that is the question of knickerbockers and long trousers. My verdict is indubitably in favor of the former. They are more comfortable in every way than are long trousers, I mean comfortable in that they do not hinder the player in his actions. The objection to flannels is that they will catch the

knees of the player whenever he stoops, and, moreover, they are apt to hinder the action of the knees in the upward swing. One has only to look at examples of instantaneous photography to see this as in the upward swing the trousers are always drawn tight across the player's knee, and they must in a certain degree hamper the freedom of the leg action.

My own personal objection to long trousers lies in the fact that they invariably interfere with my natural stance when putting as directly I commence to get down to play the shot, they draw tight across the knee and I am conscious all the while of the fact that they are thus drawn and it is a most uncomfortable feeling. When the professional first began to emancipate himself from the time honored custom of wearing long trousers and turned out in knickerbockers just like his amateur brothers, the first members of the fraternity who had the temerity to break away from traditional usage, he had to put up with a goodly degree of caustic comment, but they were wise in their generation, as from a utilitarian point of view knickerbockers are, to my way of thinking, by far the most comfortable form of nether garment in which to pursue the game of golf.

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